

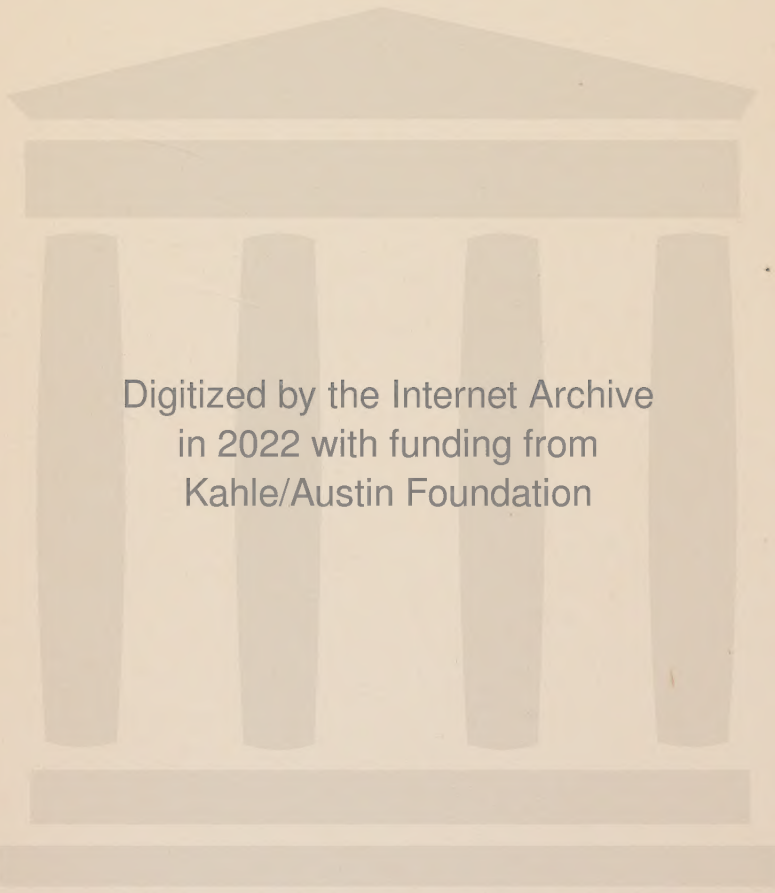


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Mary Beale Chopfield



New Backgrounds for a New Age

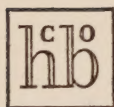


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New Backgrounds For a New Age

by
Edwin Avery Park

Illustrated with Line
Drawings and Photographs



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To C. A. B.

I affectionately dedicate this book,
achieved only with her invaluable
collaboration.

THE AUTHOR

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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New Backgrounds for a New Age

CHAPTER I

The Meaning of "Style"

SINCE THE BEGINNINGS OF HISTORY, AND EVEN BEFORE that remote day, when the gray dawn of recordable time revealed to us the movements of a race of civilized men in the valley of the Nile, it is to the artist and to his brother the artisan that we owe what we spiritually know of the succeeding manifestations of civilization upon our earth. This is increasingly true the further back we go.

The archæologist, bringing to light sensitively carved pieces of bone or delicate and practiced drawings upon the uneven walls of dark caves, sheds the first light on the emotional nature of prehistoric man. It is by these tokens we are enabled to know something of the world he looked out upon, as well as how he viewed it. Although unable to say exactly when, we know a little of how he confronted that mysterious problem of life we call religion. We know what beasts roamed the earth and how he hunted them. The artist priest, working at his task of depicting animals upon the walls of black caverns, whatever may have been his purpose, did not escape that inspiration and love of creation which comes to nearly all who set about seeking expression in line, form, or color. His observation of the mammoth, the

reindeer, and the bison was profound, and his delineation of them sensitive and alive. He tells us he was dependent on or afraid of these animals, and therefore passionately absorbed in their habits. We know that with his art he sought to propitiate them. With this evidence alone, and a little imagination, it is not difficult to reconstruct a rude but essentially true picture of the life of that remote day.



This book will attempt to deal with the most advanced tendencies in the field of applied art and architecture in this country. The fine arts, poetry, sculpture, painting, drama, and music, will not be touched upon save as they directly influence the main topic. Before beginning this discussion, a rather brief examination of the past becomes necessary since we lay our course by whence we have come.

There is nowhere in the history of art an absolute cleavage between one style and that which follows it. Yet after our strange fashion we study this peculiarly direct and evolutionary subject in a series of carefully differentiated periods. These periods, however, represent only the condition of artistic development at an arrested moment. The gradual year-to-year transition and growth of an art would have been apparent to a careful observer, under any one of the given periods. The limitations imposed upon the minds of future artists, architects, and decorators by this truncated

method of study are grave. The human value, which is all the value any style may have for us, is left out if we may not see it grow.

The essential point is this. If we believe that all life is perpetually in a state of evolutionary development, as new influences, new matter, new thought appear among us; and if, as in the instance of the Dordogne cave man, we concede any artist, however skilled, to be the interpreter of his day, and art to be the mirror of life, we are forced to conclude that the development of the two, art and life, must run a parallel course. Art must keep up with life if its function is to be expressive of that life. Our interest lies, then, not so much in a period-by-period discussion of the continuous evolution of art as in a resumé of those underlying and mutable factors governing its development which, as they vary, evoke each new expression.

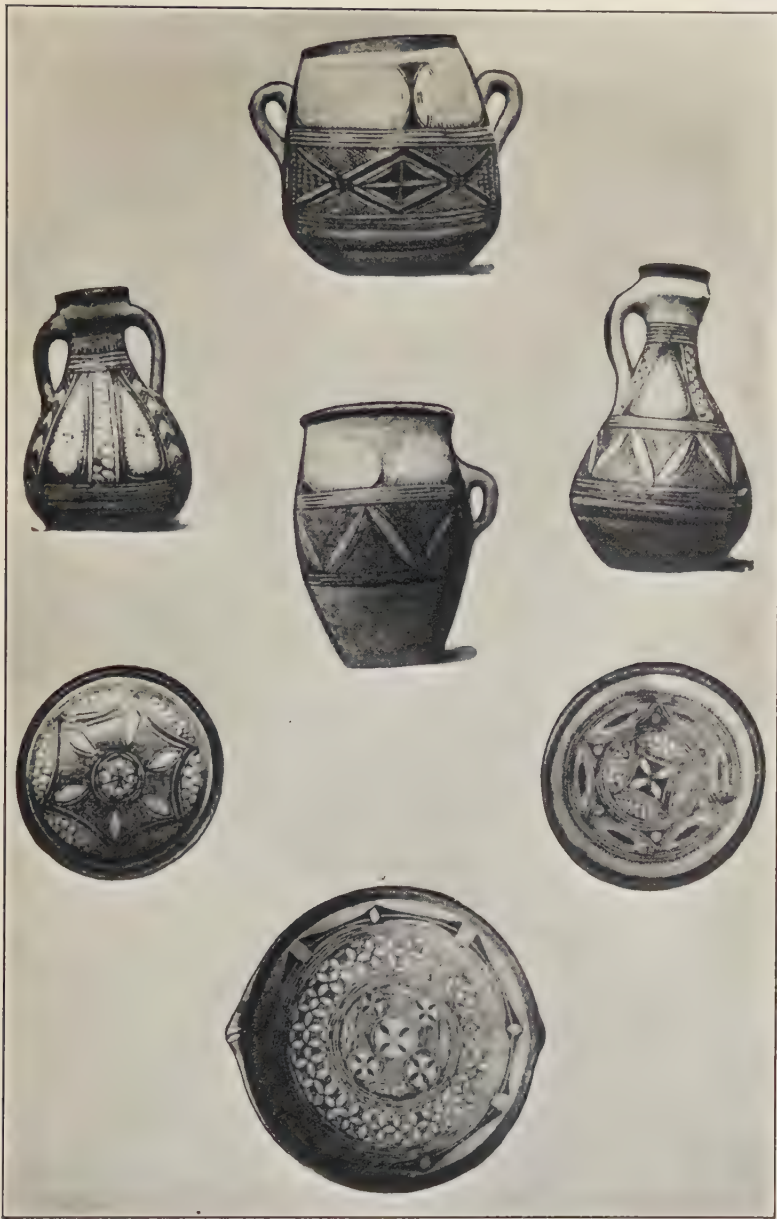
A peculiar thing about the artist, and one which renders him particularly well able to discharge the task of revealing the civilization of his day, is that his results are unconsciously achieved. He is never found, not your true artist, consciously and morally bent upon his mission of analyzing and recording his environment. It is always himself he is recording and expressing, and that because he cannot help so doing. The process is often painful and fatiguing, but the dynamic force driving him lies within himself. He feels no obligation save to whatever he may recognize as his own integral soul. He is of his day, living and absorbing its life, and

expressing himself through it, or conversely, it through himself.

It so happens that in successive ages, different combinations of elements in the potential racial character have dominated. This accounts for the difference in appearance between a temple of the Parthenon type and a thirteenth century Gothic cathedral. The designer of a cathedral was not consciously striving to create a temple which should differ in appearance from the Greek temple. In fact, he knew nothing whatever about a Greek temple, although his cathedral grew directly out of one. His cathedral resembled the Catholic mind and soul of the Middle Ages, which was based, to be sure, upon a neo-pagan philosophy, but imbued with that strange new spirit of mysticism, brought from a dark north to resolve, with the ancient heritage of culture, into a new and equally wonderful expression of beauty.

Yet the successive steps of development by which the cathedral grew out of the temple are as gentle and easy to follow as when one observes the day-to-day growth of a child, from the days of infancy until the hair is put up or the beard appears. There is little resemblance between the two states.

This organic continuity in the growth of art, no less than in everything else, is what condemns eccentricity. Pure eccentricity is superficial, it is self-conscious, it considers no foundation or background; and so, lacking the nourishment of truth, it dies. It is impossible to pro-



Courtesy of New York Public Library

FIG. I—DECORATIVE ART NEAR ITS SOURCE, THE CONFLUENCE OF
NEED AND ART



Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

FIG. 2—GOTHIC ART—IRREPRESSIBLE, INQUIRING, OBEDIENT TO FEW
RULES

claim to the world that one is about to do something new, something never before seen. If the result of such an effort be good, it will have been seen before. If it dies immediately, it will be because it has no roots whatever in the past.

If, then, we are to consider what we may call the modernist movement in decorative arts and architecture, and not condemn it, we must first prove to our own satisfaction, regardless of how its outward and unaccustomed form may affect us, that it is not self-conscious, but that it is the work of individuals unconsciously expressing themselves, or the life of their age through themselves, in whatever the medium, be it ceramics, iron, architecture, or silk; also that they are basing this expression on the tradition and experience of the past. We must certainly expect to find changes in outward appearance with which it will be our first task to familiarize and accustom ourselves.

And since this most recent change has been long in coming, during a period when, esthetically, we have remained rooted in the past, it will appear as a very startling change. For many startling things have occurred in our midst since art made any direct effort to discharge its integral function, that of proclaiming the day. Perhaps, however, this period of artistic inertia has not been overlong. Perhaps our response to the new twists industry and science have given to life has been remarkably quick. Certain it is that we are at length becoming articulate. We are saying something

about our altered state, and when one reflects how altered a state it really is, we should perhaps wonder at the comparatively short span of years necessary for coherence to appear.

As we are discussing the very present, let us once more return to our man of the Stone Age and examine what bearing his experience may have on our own problem. The most startling fact seems to be that he should have produced something that strikes our sophisticated modern eye as beautiful. It is not to be denied that there is an irresistible freshness and delicacy, a beautiful feeling for line and form, and withal a sureness of execution about his bone-drawings and cave-wall portrayals of mammoth and bison, that have awakened us to the possibilities of an art purged of nonessentials.

What is it that sets the creative mind spinning, gravitating ever toward the beautiful solution? It is not pure emulation of nature, since the more literal and naturalistic attempts to follow her become, the less convincing are the results.¹ Yet she, nature, is the basis, the source of inspiration for all our creations. The Stone Age man's drawing of the bison is not accurate. It is both exaggerated and suppressed, in relation to its actual resemblance to a bison; yet all the satisfying traits of the

¹ Cf. Keyserling, *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, Vol. I, p. 24: "Here lies the reason for her [beauty's] compelling universal character, from everybody's point of view, provided they are alive to similar tendencies of form; for every limited possibility is only capable of one supreme form of realization. It is impossible to conceive a higher degree of harmonious and general perfection of the human body than that which Greek art has revealed to us; this is why we call its creations absolutely beautiful."

bison appear, once removed from verisimilitude, and wrought into a firm and lovely shape, enclosed by fine firm lines. The bison supplied the impelling subject; the artist the beautiful line and form evoked in him by his emotions, his observation of the strength, bulk, and animal precision of the bison. The merging of these two factors gives us art. In Velasquez's portrait of Philip IV. it is not Philip that holds us, but Velasquez's own personality through his ability to penetrate and plumb the very depths of the human soul. Philip was but a king. Velasquez's rich nature dominates, strikes through the image on the canvas.

This is no less true of the worker in bronze, the fashioner of sword-hilts, gun-locks, or church doors. It is true also of the architect, sensing his intangible subject in the life of his age—finding his own self-expression in revealing its meaning. For if a painter creates a portrait of his sitter—if, for example, Titian laid bare the soul of the enigmatic "Man with the Glove"—did not Benvenuto Cellini reveal the very pagan essence of the Cinquecento in his wicked gold and crystal cups? No artist works without his subject. The subject of the Gothic builder was the mystery of the Queen of Heaven. With sublime fidelity he portrayed the infidelity of mysticism. No greater portrait exists than that one in stone, the Cathedral of Chartres, embodiment of the eternal essence of the medieval soul.

In creating the Parthenon, Ictinus epitomized the aspect of Doric culture at its apogee. His little refine-

ments on what had so logically and surely grown from a system of wooden posts and lintels merely effected the consummation of that most accurate commentary on Greek culture we possess: Greek architecture. What is the Parthenon if not the clear and lucid shrine of an earth-bound goddess, companion of men? For the Greeks are the only men the gods ever stooped to play with.

In Greek architecture one feels the wide blue heavens, the bright hot sun eternally casting black shadows. Why?

Because primarily Greek architecture is a reflection of the climate wherein Hellenic culture was conceived. Do we not find sculpture to have attained its first zenith beneath this Greek sun forever casting shadows? Sculpture is the effort to regulate and dispose shadows beautifully. And to play with shadows was a natural game for the Greeks. Observe the very fineness of refinement to be found in their architectural moldings. If not perfect, the sun would too soon seek out and publish the fact. Whatever the Greek made that had form must needs be perfect, and how near he came to achieving this perfection is one of the marvels of all time. There was no slurring the shape of a vessel born beneath the Athenian sky, no disposing of the problem of profile by trusting to diffused gray shadow. And did not the Greeks themselves have the most beautiful features and bodies, as if meeting even physically the challenge of that beauty-inviting sun?

Color, on the other hand, was relegated by the Greek to a position of secondary importance. He used it liberally upon the walls and moldings of his buildings, brilliantly and directly, but ever as a foil to form, a further setting-off of the three-dimensional problems he sought to solve. He never developed it in a detached theme, such as our easel painting of today. Instead, he subjected it to the requirements of structure. Sculpture he did develop apart, as a free agent, yet always of the nature of his architecture.

In contrast to the Greek condition consider the climatic auspices under which northern European art of the Middle Ages attained its growth. The light of northern Europe is soft and seldom perfectly clear. Place a replica of the Parthenon, as was done, in Edinburgh, and it loses all its meaning. The light dies out of its moldings, it becomes a dumb symbol. What is the matter? Nothing in the atmosphere of Scotland is calculated to reveal the kind of plastic meaning Doric architecture contains. What is the use of clean sharp angles and moldings if never set off by the sun? Classic architecture, if for no other reason than that, would never have grown on British soil and certainly it has never thriven when introduced there. And there are utilitarian reasons, also the product of climate, that necessitate a different stamp of architecture for the northern climate. Snowfall and cold winter demand steep roofs and tall chimneys. These necessary aspects of northern building become through their sheer in-

evitability the most beautiful properties of the late Gothic style. The vigorous silhouetting of a northern medieval city was not lost against the gray northern sky, a curious demonstration of the law of fitness by which necessity, simply dealt with, results in beauty. Steep roofs and mighty chimneys mean little where it never snows and where the dazzling brilliance of out-of-doors makes one content to restrain the vision or confine it to the shadowy coolness of the patio. In fact, men building beneath the southern sun have ever retreated a little from the problem of external treatment. Exquisite halls, courtyards and fountains commonly show to the street baked mud walls and high barred windows.

Light must be admitted in the north and excluded in the south. The growth of the cathedral is largely governed by this factor which we see work itself out toward ultimate perfection in just accord with every other requirement. The fact that enormous sheets of glass could be used to fill the spaces between great masonry piers, which carry the concentrated loads of the roof, gave rise to the use of stained glass. So large an opening merely glazed would have admitted too much light and heaven-bent thoughts would have wandered back into the world. Hence an art sprang into being, the expansion of a very ancient art practiced on a smaller scale in the Orient, which attempted to deal with the great window in such a way as to beautifully temper the light it admitted. So the medieval glazier

who filled the walls of Chartres, of Bourges and Notre Dame with gold and inimitable blue was afforded his opportunity for doing so by his very position on the face of the earth. And at his task he made use of the experience amassed by men working before him.

The deep sculptured portals of the cathedrals become the refuge of soft diffused shadows that on gray days have no clear edge. There was little reflection of the sun to fill like a cup with warm light the heads of deep niched portals. It was all in half-tones. Yet there is a dramatic intensity about the northern half-light. It excites the imagination in that it leaves things half obscure. It is one of those factors at the base of the mystic, dramatic, implacably searching northern intellect.

The Gothic sculptor, working with his chisel to fill some niche within the somber portal, felt and portrayed this. It was part of his being to incorporate the insecurity and mystery of life in his creations. His figures writhe with humor and humanity beneath the relaxing grasp of mighty Catholic dogma. The shadows he played for were veiled and elusive more often than incisive. His world teemed and ran with little, quick, imagined things that scuttled off into the shadows. Life was too mysterious, too unknown, too hard often to be cast in any fixed mold. He found the expression of his personality, his unconscious credo coming through him from his race born to cold winters near dark haunted forests, and from his trade, which was to make a statue,

or a gargoyle or a bit of ornament fit to put in a given place to round out an homogeneous structure. We to-day may judge of the faith with which he worked by how well he succeeded. He was neither consciously creating a style of carving, nor copying some one else. He was carrying forward something already begun because he was alive, inventive and stimulated by things beyond his ken but which led him on and on. He was only a stonecarver.

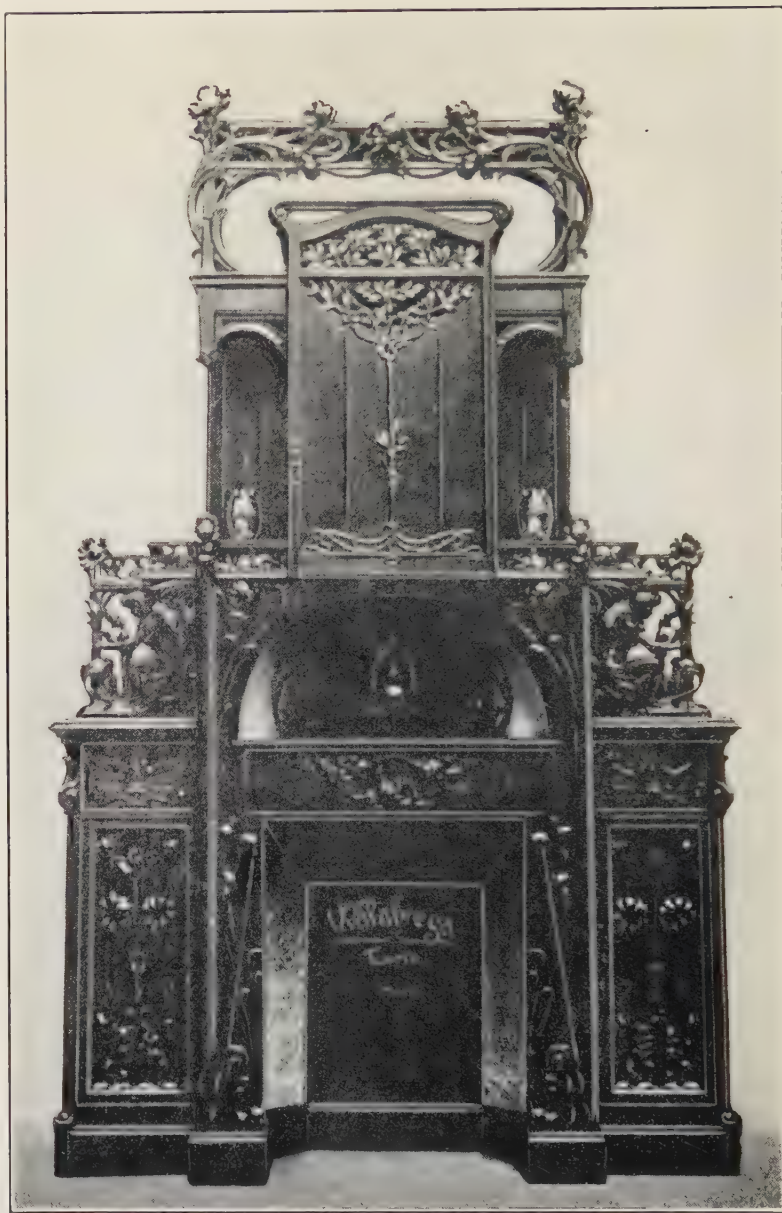
Until comparatively recent years when the old ideal of homogeneity disappeared from our practice of design, architecture has been the presiding genius of style. Beneath its all-embracing scope the other arts have found their position relative to the whole. It is natural that the structure which is to house so much should be responsible for the nature and disposition of what serves to embellish it. Sculpture and painting fell into places created for them by the architect, places where they might be seen to the fullest advantage. And it is not meant by this that architects were dictating tyrants. The freedom of the artist decorator to do as he chose within his space was seldom curtailed. All the arts grew and flourished together with equal brilliance, but the nature of all decoration, down even to the smallest objects, was determined by the fact of its ultimately becoming part of a carefully integrated scheme in which the largest element was the layout of the building itself.

A transition in style has often been effected through



Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

FIG. 3—DECORATION OF THE LOUIS XV. ERA—SOPHISTICATED, FORMAL,
AND INSECURE



Courtesy of New York Public Library

FIG. 4—ITALIAN FURNITURE OF THE SECESSIONIST PERIOD

Turin Exposition of 1902

the agency of one of those arts occupying the least space. The Renaissance came into France when Italian masons and ornament carvers made their classic arabesques spread like new vines along the door and window moldings of otherwise French Gothic structures. The Plateresque style in Spain comes from the silver-smiths who were the first to take up the new Italian manner. The relation then between architecture and her sister arts is close and important. This fact is all important when we come to consider the problem of our own day.

Another factor, varying from land to land and from place to place within a land, is the matter of material to hand for the employ of craftsman or architect. It is not what style, but what material shall he use for his carving, his building. Local material is but another of the causes which have determined the nature of style. Builders fortunate enough to have at hand a fine free-stone would develop a style unquestionably different from others limited to wood or clay.

If the master carpenter of our American colonies found little but wood to build with, the Persian architect had none. Instead, he had clay. Exploring the possibilities of what might be done with clay, pigment and fire, he presently achieved an art of ceramics which for beauty of color has never been equaled. If you take a Persian tile in your hand you can practically see how it was made. You feel it could not have been made in any other way. If it had, its potentiality for beauty

would have been impaired. Nothing else could have come so near being the simple truth about glazed, fired clay. This is the secret of the beauty of the thing, its essential success. Every little move in the process of making the tile has contributed to its beauty. The possibility of all this was discovered, step by step, during the centuries that Persians made tiles. When clay is used as clay, iron as iron, or stone as stone, the result is beauty.

Any invasion of the premise of one material by another is disastrous, which is a lesson that apparently takes a lot of learning. Deception is never as satisfying as truth, not in the long run. It is amusing but becomes wearisome. Imagine days at a time of sleight of hand! What dissatisfaction with the whole thing would grow upon one. A concrete block, cast with a face to resemble rough stone, may be the next thing to stone, but still the difference between it and a stone is the difference between mud and marble. Cast as a plain concrete brick it is one thing, not beautiful perhaps, but sincerely a durable, serviceable block made by pouring mud into a mold to harden. The moment it seeks to resemble stone and pretends to have been chipped to its shape, when really it was poured, it becomes a sorry thing.

The Spaniards have a feeling for iron. They seem to have completely grasped the nature, the exact tensile sense, the weight, the bendableness peculiar to iron. They will make an ornament, say a scroll of wrought iron, in such a way that you will say it could

not have looked so, nor been as beautiful, in any other material. Made of bronze, silver or any other metal it would have had to be done in some utterly different fashion. That is why Spanish iron work is the most famous in the world.

So, by the same token, a cast statue may not look like a carved one though the subject be identical, nor a wooden one like one of marble. Pottery may not look like porcelain, nor printed cloth like woven. Beauty lies concealed within every substance, like Michael Angelo's subjects within his blocks of marble. This beauty must be wooed to take its own form, not forced into some other. It must be brought to the surface. The Chinese cut their little jade figures into shapes of men and monkeys suggested by the uncut stone. It takes a fine sensitiveness as well as a philosophic mind to appreciate the nature of substances. These attributes an artist may not well do without. For if there be any canons in art, one of them must certainly concern itself with this reasonable premise, that a material must be used after its own fashion. When in history material has been so used the result has been the growth of a style. The stuff itself has confessed its essential nature through man's sympathetic guidance. The Parthenon means fine grain marble, hard and smooth, Notre Dame soft limestone which, almost with a pen-knife, could be cut into the minutest crockets and finials. Styles lie buried within the souls of men, the hearts of trees and stones, the

shadows cast by the sun and moon and the slow passage of time.

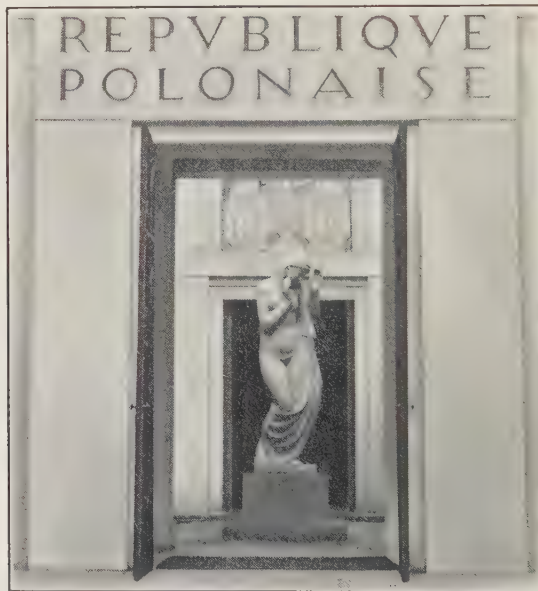
What will we in time recognize as the style of the 20th century, born, during a debacle, of the marriage of weary creeds with the little Hercules, steel, and though nurtured on disillusionment, yet grown already to be a stout infant? How will articulation come from this confusion, this Tower of Babel of yesterday's making? Already the queer modern soul is taking proportions. Its expression in the great new material, steel, in the products of the great fast-running steel machines, is beginning to show us ourselves. Already there are among us dreamers who dream in new terms of great possibilities.



Courtesy of Professor Charles Richards

FIG. 5—"LES COURSIERS." CRACKLED STONEWARE BY LEVY. PARIS, 1925

FIG. 6—SEVRES ENSEMBLE. PARIS EXPOSITION OF 1925



Courtesy of Professor Charles Richards

FIG. 7—PAVILION PRIMAVERA. BY THE ATELIER PRIMAVERA. PARIS EXPOSITION OF 1925

FIG. 8—ENTRANCE TO THE POLISH SECTION, PARIS EXPOSITION OF 1925

CHAPTER II

Decorative Art in Europe—William Morris to 1926

IN 1900, M. ALFRED PICARD, COMMISSIONAIRE GÉNÉRAL de l'Exposition Universale, reporting on the condition of industrial art then in popular favor, wrote as follows:

"The cult of the past is pushed to excess. It absorbs the entire thought, science and effort of the chief establishments of design which confine themselves to copies and restorations. A piece of furniture not adapting itself readily to this or that classification becomes immediately the object of the liveliest criticism. The audacious innovator appears as ignorant and sacrilegious. One sees nothing but the furniture of Henri II., Louis XIV., Louis XV. or Louis XVI. New and original ideas are proscribed.

"Every epoch has its customs and requirements which should be reflected in all manifestations of human life. When everything is changing, education, learning, apportionment of wealth, methods of working, material resources; mere reproduction of pure styles in furniture becomes an anachronism, and one can but regret to see the 19th century come to an end without having engendered a style."

It is evident then that there were those among the

architects and decorators of the eighties and nineties who, as the end of the century approached, were becoming restless with the vain repetitions approved by those academically minded arbiters of the taste of the day. It took no great amount of clear thinking to apprehend the state of affairs. Despite the fact that the practice of eclecticism led often to the most charming and eye-satisfying results, when carried out by designers of merit, still there was something wanting. One sensed the lack of a consistent and satisfying wholeness. Even the humble-minded began to question the logic of Turkish and Tudor architecture side by side. Still the relative unimportance of matters artistic prevented much notice being taken of this condition, and the complacent came and went among the debased objects turned out by an impoverished craftsmanship, cherishing the comfortable assurance that indisputably this was Tudor, this Regency or this Sheraton, etc.

The course of events which led up to this sad condition began perhaps (and how difficult it is to say when anything in history did begin, unless one goes back to the Stone Age itself) with the very definite ending of that movement known as the Renaissance. Renaissance means rebirth and in the field of arts and letters refers to that reflowering of Greek and Roman culture which, beginning slowly in Italy at the time of Dante, Petrarch and Giotto, spread throughout all of Europe.

In Italy, classical culture had never completely died out. To it a new impetus was imparted by the appear-

ance of a series of men of remarkable genius who awoke the sleeping beauties of this culture and unshackled Italian art of its medieval Byzantine tradition. This quickening of art was inspired by a return to antique pagan sources. Scholars and artists from Constantinople flocked to Rome as the Turks pressed ever closer about the great eastern Capital doomed soon to collapse. These men brought with them quantities of ancient manuscripts which pope and noble alike fought to procure. The classical form in poetry, architecture and sculpture supplanted the medieval, while men sifted the Roman soil for once despised fragments of cornice and statue. Soon it was going like a bonfire. Youths of the blood, and of the sword and poniard, unable to converse elegantly in Latin or even Greek, were conspicuous through their absence, in cultured circles. Pagan "humanism" thrived in an odd Christian setting, sponsored by the pontiff himself, and spread to all quarters of Europe.

Yet, and here is the important part of the whole matter, in all this antique furor, there was more of true artistic aliveness than pure copying of classic form. The impulse to become alive and articulate transcended the cold threat of this dead if lovely past. Artists were alive and alive to their day. They had something to say and turned suddenly to classic forms as a means of escape from the too confining bonds of a somber mysticism, which, while it repressed, had promoted the growth of a soul that broke now into joyous song.

Naïvely, while imitating, they really innovated. What they accomplished was the use of classical forms in a perfectly new, and beautiful, manner unheard of in ancient times. The concourse of lovely creation that followed is one of the miracles of history. The secret lay in their not knowing too much. They never overstressed the importance of what formal classical knowledge they possessed. Creative minds dominated the situation and kept art on a creative basis. The pedant could not be heard above the din of doing. The tide of invention fostered by hundreds of inspired geniuses swept all threats of formalization from the path.

Later, however, erudition became a curse, for when, toward the end of the 16th century, the field of creative art began to be invaded by scholars, the death knell of the Renaissance was sounded and the seeds of our modern dilemma sown.

This decline of traditional art coincided almost exactly with the birth of modern economic and scientific conditions. The archeological period in its zealous infancy gained ground as rapidly as did the Renaissance at its inception, but with this difference; it lacked the creative vitality, the warm pulsating life of that earlier day, and furnished in its stead an ever more accurate knowledge of exactly how the ancients placed stone upon stone. There was no virtue in this, for the artistic impulse itself became atrophied. There were good artists still, and well trained, yet their creative impulse

seems to have been submerged in an effort literally to emulate the antiquity about which they knew too much. The pendulum had begun to swing the other way. Hundreds of books on classical architecture appeared, the most beautiful tomes of drawings, reconstructions of the decayed monuments of Greece and Rome, and the architecture and decoration that followed were lifted almost bodily from, rather than inspired by, these works. Scholarship, increased facilities of reproduction, the shift in economic conditions, and soon steam and machinery, all combined to destroy the long established and continuous tradition of art, substituting little of true merit in its stead.

In France, J. A. Gabriel was the last architect to work in the spirit of the Renaissance. His buildings at Versailles and the two palaces on the Place de la Concorde in Paris have still a freshness so acutely in contrast to the imperious façade of the Madeleine, seen in the distance between them. They represent French architecture. The Madeleine is Roman. Gabriel's contemporary, Soufflot, was also at work, erecting the vast and scholarly Pantheon, evading structural issues in his fidelity to the appearance of the Roman models. Piranesi, the Italian etcher, gave to the world in quick succession his remarkable plates of Roman decorative detail. The Empire style and the work of the brothers Adam in England grew from this and similar sources.

The emulation of the classic manner was in the air philosophically as well as esthetically. Napoleon's ideals

of state were derived from the same imperial sources, and his buildings in Paris, the Madeleine, the Bourse, the Arc du Carrousel cry out for legions and togas to complete the picture. The popular mind subscribed to the delusion that in copying antiquity, the miracle of reconstructing the imagined perfections of classical civilization was being performed. The old order came to an end. The order of art under patronage, of established tradition, of the medieval social system, was ended. Theories became confused with the facts slowly built up through ages of experience, and men became lost in the fog of too easily acquired and too often badly construed knowledge. Why the curious inappropriateness and illogic of this new infatuation with the art of the past were not at once apparent to a few clear minds is hard to say.

Europe was in for the 19th century, the epoch of "revivals." Not since Rome sought to rival the Greece she enviously possessed had the human mind so run away with this idea. The Renaissance, to all intents, escaped its perils. What had the solution of climatic or structural problems by the citizens of ancient Athens to do with the winter-chilled and -darkened inhabitants of London and Paris? Little or nothing, and there was little gayety in the proof of this fact as architect and craftsman struggled with the situation.

It is chiefly in the field of architecture that the worst results are seen. Furniture, metal work, ceramics and glassware as well as printed and woven fabrics suffered

less. At first they held their own and our "antique" interiors of today are enriched by the possession of Sheraton and Adam pieces, beautiful cretonnes and wall papers block-printed in classical motifs. In these fields the discrepancies were less noticeable and because less vital, less serious. But the perpetration of an inconsistency in stone lasts forever.

The Classic revival became the Greek revival and we have but to glance at the side streets of any one of our older cities to see houses with the pillared façades of Greek temples, for whose quaint charm the most advanced logician of art must retain a lingering affection. The perfect absurdity of the performance is not the least endearing of its aspects. Yet these naïve bequests of our grandparents furnish a living proof that philosophical preoccupations and blind emulation of an ideal furnish the worst kind of inspiration for one so fundamentally and organically concerned with truth and life as is the artist, be he architect, glazier or painter. In all branches the experiment failed to produce more than curiosities occasionally brilliant or beautiful in spite of their inherent weakness.

A subsequent and equally fatuous performance was the rise and fall of the Gothic revival. Yet it is to this movement that we must look for the first glimmer of the coming dawn. It was the pedantic and prolific Pugin who, while the Greek revival was yet in full swing, began preaching Gothic, "the architecture of our forefathers," for Englishmen. He was succeeded and

more than equaled by Ruskin, who was as gifted by God with truly great eloquence as he had been denied a profoundly logical mind. His burning condemnation of classic art and his remarkable ability to interpret the perfections of Gothic made him a power in the land. Particularly in England his cult spread and was echoed in this country, although there was no good reason to expect that a return to medieval forms would solve the building problems peculiar to a budding machine-made industrialism.

The advent of machine industry constitutes a monster milestone in economic history. In the history of art the same milestone becomes a memorial to the dead. Truly that was an age of blindness when men's minds were ardently shut to reason. But the world must ever be heedless when it sets out upon a new adventure. The great discoverers made little of prudence. Cortez's advance upon the city of Mexico was recklessly imprudent and the devil took the hindmost. The nature of machinery was the devil which at the beginning of the 19th century began laying its hands upon architecture, and the arts and crafts of the past. The corruption of taste into a condition of accepting the beautyless creations of machines stands as a startling revelation. If men suddenly turn from the beautiful to the ugly it must be they know no difference between the two. Perhaps in this case it lay in the dazzling miracle of the machine which unseated the judgment and blinded the eye. Probably however there never has been, among the

masses of humanity, a positive predilection for the beautiful. If they possessed beautiful objects, it was for another reason. The confining of production, heretofore, to an aristocracy of artists and artizans gave to the world only the work of men who had become artists by training and also by elimination. The shifting of artistic production to the machine poured forth upon the world products incidental to the major issue involved, which was the machine itself. Mill owners more often displayed their smooth-running machinery than the wares thereof.

Equally disastrous was the accompanying gradual decay of craftsmanship. The production of machine-made objects demanded not so much a skilled hand worker as a good mechanic. The shift became a landslide through economic necessity. The meager output of handcraft could not compete with that of machinery, especially when only a handful recognized the difference in quality of the products. Perforce artizans dropped chisel and hammer to take up the oil can. Bread is bread and the men who once represented a uniformly patronized if poor aristocracy of artists now became a competing economic factor. Now it does not seem to be inherent in the nature of art to endure this condition. Therefore it is the resolution of this problem that still confronts us and constitutes the heart of the matter. It concerns that debatable quantity, the soul of the artist.

At this juncture, how remote seemed the chances of things ever straightening out. Here was art already

forced to its knees by man's new fetish, the machine, and with nothing to fall back upon save a naïve enthusiasm for the obsolete and inappropriate past. Nevertheless, this practice of copying was alone responsible for the maintenance of craftsmanship, for keeping architect and craftsman from becoming hopelessly lost. Hardly a soul at first realized how completely revolutionary would be the results of the introduction of machinery. Arts and crafts had either to entirely reconstitute themselves or give way utterly before the impact of so hardy and hostile a power.

It was not the brutalization of art by the machine so much as the unintelligence of craftsmen in persisting to offer, to the unoffending machine, art in such a way that it must inevitably suffer. Persisting in a prolongation of the past was like persisting to sit on the beach after the tide had risen. One must move to a new position or be drowned. No crime can be laid to the machine. Man made it and he must not blame it for the fact that he has remained blind as to how it may be fittingly used. With the past it has nothing to do. To us it has no soul, no mystery. And it will continue to destroy what is weaker than itself—on its own premise, until we discover how to control it. The past cannot compete with the present. The sensitive man-made art of yesterday, if endlessly reproduced by a senseless machine, is killed in the act. It is crushed by the machine. The machine spells steel. Steel is the world today, steel the climax of the iron age, hidden potential in the crust of this earth,

since time began, now emerged bright and daring, strong enough to twist the very destiny of earth itself.

The first craftsman to whom it became apparent that something must be done if art were to be saved was William Morris, an Englishman. He is the John the Baptist, the spiritual forerunner of the entire modernist movement. Necessarily he was a poet and a philosopher as well as a craftsman, else he would not have emerged. At the age of seventeen he visited the Great Exposition and marveled at the ugliness of all he beheld. This was in 1851, the middle of the century, seventy-five years ago. The Exposition itself, however, played into his very hands in that it was responsible for a new and tremendous impetus to industrial art. Ruskin also swam on this tide. Morris apprehended the decay of handcraft and taste. With little but an intrepid ideal to aid him, he attempted to stem the flood. At first, he identified himself with the Gothic revival, and with great wisdom as well as idealism, he attempted, by making moderate use of machinery, to find some rational adjustment between it and handcraft. In 1866 the firm of Morris, Marshall and Faulkner was organized on an amateur basis, to, as complacent onlookers put it, "teach professionals their trade." And they succeeded. Artists used machines and produced beautiful works, of an incomparably higher merit than the ordinary industrial output. The first blow had been struck. It was the battle of Cavadonga of industrial art. Their output was in furniture, textiles, of which Morris himself was

a particularly excellent designer, and ceramics. As Morris' art developed, he leaned ever more heavily upon nature as his source of inspiration, and beautiful as are his creations, still they have the weakness that accompanies the tendency to copy nature rather than derive from it. Still it is but natural that he should have done this. Perceiving, as Ruskin and Rossetti failed to do, that there was no virtue in the art of the past for modern need, he returned to the source of all, nature, only to find that the key had been lost. His message was tremendous if his attainments were sometimes of questionable merit. Surrounded by Classic and Gothic revivals, Pre-Raphaelitism, sentimentality, and hostile machines, he thought and felt his way to the root of things, and what is more remarkable, his art found favor and spread.

It was Morris' taste that by the very strength of its position, as the revivalist furor dwindled, became characteristic of the work of his day and profoundly influenced the thought of other men. He brought the craftsman and the machine together for the first time.

In matters of artistic discrimination, the French have never gone so far astray as have the English and the other peoples of Europe. The French mind is not so pervertible because probably it is less gullible. However the Great Exposition of 1851 so deplored by Morris made the French fear for the safety of their reputation as the arbiters of European taste. The English and Germans were quicker to get on to the trick of industrial-

ism and for many years led the French in this field. The conservatism of the Academy and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts held French designers in an unrelaxing grip, and the few individuals guilty of attempts at rupture with tradition were suffered to remain in obscurity. The great "periods" sufficed to French needs and things were at a standstill.

It must be admitted that France had weathered the storm of revivalism rather well. She had succeeded in converting the Greek revival into a somewhat free movement derived from the Greek but soundly based on logical architectural form. Viollet-le-Duc, the leading Gothic revivalist of France exercised his talents rather as a writer and archæologist, playing at the restoration of Carcassonne, than as a designer. Any attempt at innovation, as indicated by M. Alfred Picard as late as 1900, would have been frowned upon. The French are too spiritually independent to take up with a new movement until it has nearly perished or shown its worth. They expose their originals as did the Spartans their children and eliminate the less fit. William Morris could not have done in France what he accomplished in England.

It is unfortunate when any movement, particularly one in art, gives itself consciously a name. The appearance of "l'Art Nouveau" in 1896 as a definite movement in design, sponsored by M. Siegfried Bing, was a bold stroke. Bing was a student of Japanese art and had written a book, "Japon Artistique," prior to this ven-

ture. The following year saw the organization of "les Cinq," consisting of Felix Aubert, Alexandre Charpentier, Jean Dampf, Henry Nocq, and Charles Plumet, who were joined a year later by Tony Selmersheim and Etienne Moreau-Nealton.

Their work was doomed because it was bad. To begin with it was self-conscious, a deliberate attempt to break with the past. If sincere, it attempted too bold a step. The past may not be shaken off. It was weak in design owing to the insistence upon the use of a peculiar willowy line, often called the "whiplash line," and as was the case with Morris, a too literal following of the weakest types of natural forms. The style at best is slender, supple and springy, and successful only in smaller objects. In general it sought to mold form to decoration rather than decoration to form. This mistake is not so noticeable in a piece of jewelry as in architecture or furniture.

Art Nouveau did, however, represent a definite attempt on the part of a few designers to emancipate themselves from the outworn garb of past generations. That the first step in so perilous a direction should prove only partly successful is not to be wondered at. And although in its original form it found little favor, still it must be reckoned as the initial step in the rapid development of the French modern style. Its limited scope came from the fact that it did not go deeply enough into the problem of wherein today differs from

yesterday, nor seek to give thoughtful expression to any of the new issues of life.

England and Germany paid little attention to the movement. At the exposition of 1900, "les Cinq" displayed the "Foyer Moderne," from which the world turned without sympathy and without comprehension. In appearance the "Foyer Moderne" was fantastic and cold, restless, thin and uninviting. The critics from the fastness of the Ecole bombarded the innovators with ridicule. By 1907 the outlook was black as the reproduction of antiquity went on with increasing skill. Still such men as Lalique, Delaherche, Plumet and Lenoble were patiently developing technique, and bringing to design a new spirit that grew in spite of all opposition. If the public remained apathetic, at least the relation between artist and manufacturer improved, which had been one of the most difficult aspects of the French problem, since their artists had not been brought so easily into the industrial fold as had the English and the German.

The four terrible years of the war did not check this progress. In fact the French people themselves came a little to look upon their new art as symbolic of the national hope, something courageous and of that future for which they strove. The wounded found work they could do among the ateliers of modern designers. From France came the crystalized expression at last. Forced to become a new France, she turned for the first time

to her new art. After the armistice the tenth Salon of the "Artistes Décorateurs" at the Pavillon de Marsan showed how little the style had lost. Six months later, at the Salon d'Automne of 1919, no less than fifty ensembles were shown and since then every day has seen the opening of new shops. Thanks to M. Paul Léon, the decoration of the Voie Triomphale was entrusted to the "modernists"!

Since the war French decorative art has remained exclusively Parisian. Purged of its early eccentricities and self-consciousness, it has become simplified, elegant and perfect in technique. It has lost its bare cold look, developed a wonderful command of color and become comfortable, intimate, and often luxurious. Today the individual designer, the "ensemblier," designs everything from the house itself down to the rugs on the floor.

It is rather a new spirit than a new style since there is such a multiplicity of styles. Poiret, Rhulemann, Edgar Brandt, Sué and Mare and Maurice Dufrêne all have individual expressions which vary widely one from the other, yet their creations would be recognized as belonging to the same movement, based on the same first cause. It is interesting to note, as proof of the popularization of the modernist movement in France today, that each of the four great department stores has its own atelier of modern art. Le Printemps came first with the Atelier Primavera, as early as 1913. Then followed the Galeries Lafayette with La Maîtrise,



Courtesy of Professor Charles Richards

FIG. 9—LALIQUÉ ROOM

Paris Exposition of 1925



FIG. 10—AN ECLECTIC ROOM

Photograph by Kenneth Clark



FIG. 11—A MODERN "PERIOD" ROOM

Photograph by Gillies

the Bon Marché with Pomone, 1922 and in 1923 the Louvre with its Studium. The summing up of the situation was seen in the great Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs at Paris in 1925, where every country in Europe exhibited, in its individual setting, objects of art from every field of craft, and the time-honored and familiar "periods" were nearly as rare as were the works of the hardy innovators twenty-five years earlier at the exposition of 1900.

In Austria, although for many years designers had been discontent with things in the traditional manner and had made sporadic efforts at innovation, it waited upon the appearance of a dominating personality for the launching of any concerted effort. This came about in the person of Hans Wagner, who had been appointed professor of architecture at the Vienna Academy, on the strength of his somewhat revolutionary views as to the nature of architecture. Wagner had been a pupil of Siccardsburg, who inculcated in him a respect for the primary demands of structure, and his book, "Modern Architecture," which made its appearance in 1895, stressed the approach to architecture through logical structural channels. This was of course a blow to those who adhered to the ancient practice of making a building in a certain style and fitting the materials of construction to the demands of that style. Wagner advocated working the other way about. He said let materials work out their expression through structure, and build in the spirit of the materials you

use. To quote him—"Art exists for mankind, and not mankind for art." This was of course related to the then recent appearance of now familiar modern methods of construction.

Wagner's critics were scornful, but he found a following in the younger generation of artists, who beneath his generous and compelling nature departed en masse from the traditions of the past in a movement known as the Vienna Secession. All began working upon the basis that purpose and material controlled design, and owing to this salutary and profoundly sound beginning, the movement prospered. In the field of decorative art as well as architecture, Wagner was the leader of a powerful school of young men adapting their efforts to this same gospel. In France, *l'Art Nouveau* had begun by a superficial effort to adapt form to decorative ends. Here the reverse was true. Instead of a return to plant and flower forms as sources of decoration, the trend was toward the use of geometric pattern based on straight lines and angles. This practice coincided well with the simple rectilinear tendencies of new structural methods and although lacking in vigor and warmth it argued the consistency of the whole movement. Form and decoration began taking on a new and homogeneous appearance which if lacking in charm was at least sincere and awaited merely the disappearance of crudity through experience, and the necessary advance in new technical methods.

An important factor in the Austrian movement,

which from the start centered about Vienna, was the foundation in 1903 of the famous "Wiener Werkstaette," by Professor Joseph Hoffman and Professor Koloman Moser, aided by a wealthy patron. Hoffman and Olbrick (who had been summoned to Hess, in Germany), were the most noted of the younger men trained by Wagner. The "Wiener Werkstaette" was based upon the ideal of William Morris in an attempt to raise the level of craftsmanship in the industrial manufacture of objects in common use. It became a school and an experimental laboratory as well as a profitable manufactory. Constant experiments, scientifically conducted, brought to art a new knowledge of the nature of materials with a consequent expansion of technical methods. Glass, ceramics, metals and dyes, came in contact with the scientific knowledge and scientific method of the day, and with the most gratifying results. Joseph Urban, well known in America today as a designer of stage settings and recently also as an architect, was one of the pioneers of the "Wiener Werkstaette." Examples of his work in the ensemble manner were shown at the Vienna Secession as early as 1901, when already his splendid grasp of color and the vigor and fertility of his imagination were bringing him fame.

So in Austria, under the conduct of trained and intelligent artists working coöperatively, the growth of the "new art" has been rapid and sure. It has succeeded through the excellence of its results and the combined

intelligence and idealism with which it has been administered. Thought engendered by the movement has penetrated as far even as the artistic education of the child, in which field Dr. Franz Cizek labors with the tragic children of the war to help them sense and express the unperturbed beauty of which childhood is aware. It has become a system of thought, almost a philosophy, as slowly through the mediumship of the artist, people have become aware that all our ways are changed and that there is no turning back.

Time is revealing the fact that this new spirit is the common property of modern man. Hence the output of European art is becoming ever more homogeneous as each country, although expressing the inherent tendencies of its particular racial taste, is bound by the same structural and technical limitations as its neighbor. In the same manner the Gothic art of Europe approached homogeneity when its inspiration and technique were shared in common, subject of course to variation of material and climate.

Germany was not an esthetic pioneer in the new movement. Her rôle lay frankly in the industrial aspects of the situation, the great possibilities inherent in the application to machine industry of the new order. As seen first, at the Universal Exposition of 1900, the German new art bore greater resemblance to Austrian than French departures, but lacked the freshness of either. It had already embarked upon its triumphant industrial career in which the esthetic element, that of



Courtesy of Sinclair Lewis

FIG. 12—BROOKLYN BRIDGE

Painting by Nevinson



Courtesy of Cheney Brothers

FIG. 13, FIG. 14—MODERN FRENCH ADVERTISEMENTS

inspiration, remained the servant of the stronger element, the machine with its tremendous reproductive and commercial potentiality. If Germany's products lacked the quality of those of her competitors, at least she controlled the world market at the outbreak of the war. Divested of idealism, still her arts and industries were a marvel of collective organization which saw newly evolved forms fed to machines as formulae and innovation carried forward with methodical exactness. The German artists have shown their ability to advance in the new direction through their genius for isolating the germ, not the soul, of the movement and mechanically making use of the principle to evolve similar results.

A more detailed account of the growth of modernism would necessitate the inclusion of Italian, Spanish, Scandinavian and Russian work, but the present account is given in an attempt to no more than indicate the spiritual genesis and growth of the movement as a thing apart from its detailed development. For this purpose, a brief outline of the growth and spread of the movement to France, Austria and Germany from the seed planted by William Morris will suffice, since these countries have most influenced us.

CHAPTER III

American Esthetics Today

THERE IS AN AMUSING ASPECT TO LIFE IN THIS country today. One is put in mind of a large infant seriously preoccupied with an intricate toy which for the time being demands the focus of all its faculties. The way in which new disclosures of science, when applied to invention and manufacture, can be made to perform is fascinating. It does not, at least to foreigners, seem a particularly serious business, but it is cheerful and expensive. It is not at such a time that man's consciousness makes long and fascinated excursions into the region of his soul. Nor is it an era of great artistic endeavor, since there is lacking that sobering contact with reality which it has become our peculiar genius to avoid. The faith of a great part of our nation seems fixed in "life as it is not." Our continental cousins have more difficulty in eluding serious realities.

Arguing from the point of view of tradition, it is one thing to make a poem or a picture about Columbus, and quite another to attempt the same about the Wright Brothers. It can be done, but the result would to us be lacking in something which would recommend it as real poetry. What is the difficulty? It is that we are attempting to cast something new into an old form. It

is as much an anachronism as to envisage the gentlemen of our Senate going about in Roman togas, smoking their cigars. It is why Oriental diplomats appear at their worst in frock coat and silk hat.

The ancient forms of artistic expression came into being through ages when the nonmaterial aspects of life were alone considered worthy of song and representation. Hence such forms evolved so as to best express a romantic and heroic content. Today, romance and the panoply of heroes are no longer the absorbing thing. Something else quite different now compels popular interest. It is the new world of science, industry and business through which the glamour of the past has fallen away.

Is there beauty in this new and absorbing material environment, and if so, how and when are we to make some application of it to our creative art? Surely there is beauty in much we see, in aeroplanes, steel bridges, automobiles, and steamships. There is beauty in scientific precision, in efficiency, in almost anything which may be used to lessen the drudgery, poverty and suffering of human life. But we are still evolving these things and only slowly applying them to real human needs. Prejudice, fear of change, and lack of imaginative vision obscure the beauty of today, discourage us from attempting to see it and from finding means to express it. Art with us is still incidental.

With the serious task of learning to appreciate our ugly duckling only a few in this country are as yet

concerning themselves. The real game is too fast and furious and absorbing, and it is also too tremendously important a game to relax one instant from its strict pursuit. As our leisure begins to come and we lay off a little, and realize we are no longer as young as we were—then only will we turn as a whole to telling the world about what we have done.

Not ever again can the deeds of discovery and creation of this age be so well done as now. The great infant at its play is truly playing seriously, far more seriously than we know. Momentarily new matter is being added to the field of man's knowledge and new tools to do with, new materials to be done with. It should not be stopped, nothing should interfere, no forced precepts concerning our souls and art should obtrude until the time when it is natural for us to look up from a finished task.

We cannot stop it. The game seems a very healthy one and it will make a great song later on, an inconceivable song, so different will it be. And if in outward appearance the present exploitation of all this new matter does not appeal to us, seems cheap and even retrogressive in civilization, there is no reason to suppose it should appear otherwise. But it is not fit that by its sorry outward manner it should be judged hopeless. Civilization never has been hopeless, although in the midst of certain pitiless epochs of transition and growth, those myopically immersed in them have failed to distinguish the light ahead. Surely the world abuses

its new toys, just as does any child. None the less it is wonderful to be young, learning slowly to develop, unfolding our cosmic faculties, our mind and soul in play, gleaning wisdom.

Speaking of our modern day in his book, "The Story of Philosophy," Mr. Will Durant says, "Our modern danger is precisely opposite; inductive data fall upon us from all sides like the lava of Vesuvius; we suffocate with uncoördinated facts; our minds are overwhelmed with sciences breeding and multiplying into specialistic chaos for want of synthetic thought and a unifying philosophy. We are all mere fragments of what a man might be."

This is a very bad state of things. It is true, but it sheds the saddest of lights on the situation. There is perhaps a more optimistic, a more hopeful and perhaps constructive appraisal possible if we have the courage to make it. It is like a tired person confronting an enormous pile of soiled dishes to be washed, sorted, stacked and put away. We are weary with the excess of creating the situation, the banquet which soiled the dishes if you will, and slow to begin the everlasting toil of clearing up. Yet, when the task is done, and it always has been done before, given time, what a beautiful job it is. This time, however, with all the new dishes, a larger cupboard will be necessary. The tendency is to lie down and give up in front of this task, as the gentleman of the old school wilts before the flapper. But rub his eyes as he will, the flapper will not disappear. She is not an

hallucination, she is all too healthy and independent.

It seems too bad that serious and right-minded people fail to extract more amusement from the age, more pagan joy in facing this new life. The young people of such sad repute seem its only sponsors and yet they did not create it, they are having to put up with it. It is they who will in the end wash and put away the dishes. Then when the job is done, what lovely songs will be sung, what marvelous pictures painted. It will happen, for there seems no reason to believe that in the 20th century, the world should suddenly be confronted by a task too great for it when time after time it has risen to the jump. It has lived down glaciers, barbarian hordes, and, worst of all, religious disagreements. So that now with merely indigestion and plenty of physicians, it looks as if we might survive.

One artist I know believes we cannot long endure the pace, that we will have to give way and fall back upon the Middle Ages for help. It is a little like the envious feeling one has when embarked in a rowboat, and a sea sled goes tearing by. Despair over the present in favor of the past is a joke older than that of the mother-in-law. And yet a feeling that the day may kill itself through the unbearable complications of its present state is not unwarranted. Patience is necessary. And the sensitive nature inclined to mysticism must suffer. The strain, for instance, of coping with the present traffic block signal devices in attempting to get about town is all but insupportable. If it continues to ramify we shall

enter the hero class, those of us who survive—but of such stuff will the future be made. It may be that to be able to say: "My great-great-grandfather lived through the traffic-tower period," will be the equivalent of claiming, as many of us do today, that our ancestors survived the Indian massacres.

To worry too much over the disappearance of mysticism today is like bemoaning oneself in a sinking ship because one cannot find one's hat, and an old hat at that. As scholasticism frustrated the science of Roger Bacon and Leonardo, so today science is having its hour at the expense of our immortal souls. What is inevitable must have its way and be dealt with.

In this condition of confusion, which we all feel, how cherishable are the comforting back glances at the past, all laid to rest, its conflicts erased by time. How quiet and tempting seem the lives led by our Colonial forebears. How it would have charmed us to wrestle with a frozen pump in the icy dawn. This is practically our esthetic status today in our choice of architecture and what is known as interior decoration.

After the subsidence of the Greek and Gothic revivals . . . and we are still tinkering with the Gothic "proposition" . . . darkness shut in for a time. Martin Chuzzlewit's unflattering observation anent our civilization was made at this moment. The United States was sinking in a terrible bog of black walnut, red plush and brownstone, a veritable nightmare. (Still, the atrocities of this so-styled Victorian era are today being raked

out, dusted off and found beautiful by those who distinguish in them a charming naïveté; another revival.)

The machines had us by the throat during these years. Because an object could be made into a new fancy form with a jigsaw or cast in iron to resemble something it was not, its reputation was made. A thin veil of sentimental thought spread lightly over all. Cut off from the rest of the world we grew, seldom making comparisons where they were unsought and unflattering. The cult of life as it is not (but may be for a time sustained when nature is kind) was engendered.

What pulled us out of the hole was the French Ecole des Beaux-Arts. A few young American architects departed for France. There they studied, and coming home, set about stemming the tide. They had received the most excellent eclectic training of the strictly academic sort. Instead, however, of trying to make a good thing out of what they found when they returned, which, awful as it was, certainly expressed America of that day, they superimposed a purely exotic culture of styles.

This was an important turning of the tide and in some ways its results were much to be desired. In setting about the copying of antique technique we reacquainted ourselves with such matters as the cutting of stone, the finishing and shaping of wood, etc., which had become sadly perverted during the industrial debacle. The benefits to the craftsman became the benefits of the populace. Gradually taste began lifting itself,



Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

FIG. 15—SIXTEENTH CENTURY ITALIAN ARMOR



FIG. 16--TALL BUILDINGS OF THE OLD AND NEW TYPE, EAST
FIFTY-SEVENTH STREET, NEW YORK CITY

Sketch by the Author

almost by its own boot straps, to a position where the appearance of a well-proportioned doorway no longer aroused suspicion. In New York today they are busy destroying all traces of this last renaissance. The last echoes of the classic revival are being drowned out by blast and rivet, before they have died away. The gray stone house of the Vanderbilt family on Fifth Avenue, the work of Richard Hunt, one of the first to return from Paris, came recently to occupy a position economically untenable. It was a direct adaptation of the French style of Francis I., faultlessly carried out, and its share in elevating the popular taste must have been inestimable. So also, Madison Square Garden has become a memory and the very inevitability of the passing of these really splendid monuments seems to point to some inherent instability in their existence from the beginning. If the city had not begun to find the balance of its economic expansion when they were built, neither had the fashioners of the garb with which it became temporarily invested discovered the main issue. Progress, as we term it, has little place for sentiment. Inexorably the outlived must give way before the stern demand of growth, which cannot be stopped. In history many thousands of beautiful things have gone into the furnace that new might be erected from their ashes, for better or for worse. The marble façades of Rome were burned for lime to make plaster and the Coliseum became the quarry from which, during the Renaissance,

palaces of imperishable fame were cut. Beauty alone is the most naked and defenseless thing in the world.

The manufacturers of furniture followed this same course of development. Making allowance for the small amount of originality manifested, we returned to the "periods," from which we chose at will. At first the effort of manufacturers was to learn the styles so that they might accurately reproduce them, by machine. When an advance had been made in this direction, the matter of finish and material occupied more attention and finally, to gild the lily, many producers came to the point where they could actually impart the aspect of age to their reproductions. How splendid to have a Tudor table and have it look old too! Still this was excellent practice, and by preserving technical knowledge, kept alive a few pairs of skilled hands.

In architecture the use of the styles was empirically directed by the designer from on high, and here was a great departure. The man with knowledge, the architect himself, directed the efforts of even the craftsmen beneath him. If a piece of carving was to be done, its exact form was worked out on the drafting table by the designer, who had recourse to books and who controlled every minor detail of the design. He imposed upon the craftsman what had once been his, the craftsman's, own business so that the sustaining of excellence in the matter of detail became a burden borne by the designer who had few if any craftsmen sufficiently acquainted with the chosen style to be relied upon to de-

sign on their initiative. The designer must "keep the ball in the air" if he makes himself responsible for an arbitrary style. It was equivalent to a man's making his own clothes and haberdashery in order to be decently dressed. The benefits of this move were at the expense of the man who held the pencil, for the man with the chisel must await the line drawn by the pencil.

Once this was not so. The architect was the keystone of an arch of collaborating designers. If he pointed out the spot where a piece of carving was to go, he left the designing of it chiefly to the man who carried it out. In our Colonial days, before the advent of machines and when style was homogeneous, the itinerant cabinet maker was the fashioner of furniture. He remained with the family while he made a set of chairs for a given room, or a cupboard to fit a certain corner. He was both designer and maker, and a self-respecting man of worth, whose creations are today purchased at great price or elaborately imitated by his descendants.

It is true of our eclectic position today that if it has produced and is still producing objects of beauty, yet because of its borrowed raiment it cannot be for long sustained. When it shall have served its day we will turn from it with scarcely a sigh.

Let us say that a house has been designed by one man, as to plan and exterior, and then turned over to the "interior decorator" who represents the procurer or purveyor of the wares which must next be considered in the shaping of the house, but which have become

divorced from the architect's superintending eye. The power of the interior decorator is tremendous and his point of vantage unassailed. Armed with the "periods," he has in the past proceeded to go on where the architect left off and do pretty much as he chose. One room he may have elected to "do" in the Venetian manner, another, adjoining it, "Henri II.," and a third Dutch Colonial. The result can hardly be anything but rich, luxurious and beautiful (if it be faithful enough to type) but upon being invited to inspect it, one can never escape the feeling that it is a set piece, for all of its beauty. It seems possible to do it all too well. But where is anything that would tell an observer that he was in this day and generation? Only the turning on of a radio, made to look like a Gothic reliquary.

If the period decorator has achieved beauty, he has achieved it at the expense of time which waits for no man. He will dance and dine to jazz, read "Ulysses," have himself psychoanalyzed, listen to Debussy, appreciate Cézanne and ride in an aeroplane. But he will be installing an Empire suite in some wealthy lady's apartment. If the function of art, in this instance architecture and the allied arts, is to proclaim the civilization of its day, ours is doing its task but too well. It amounts to an admission, not a positive assertion. Our situation is precisely what we see about us. We have nothing to say for ourselves so we repeat in unison the phrases of the past. Fine, but is it satisfying, as satisfying as it would have been to be up on some dizzy scaffold in the



FIG. 17—CYLINDERS

Photograph by I. Vanderpant



FIG. 18—PATTERN OF FORMS

Photograph by K. M. Anderson

13th century, chipping out a crocket the like of which had never before been seen? We *are* confused and enmeshed in the coils of modern potentiality. With chances for technical achievement never before seen, we stand mute, inarticulate, and weakly turn the pages of the history book.

Antique furniture is also a cult of today; our own, European, anybody's will do, provided it be wormy enough. Even monstrosities will do, provided their authenticity be proven. At last the old table relegated to the attic by Grandmother, to make way for a black walnut and marble affair, has found a taker, and an ardent one. These old things are peculiarly comforting to the eye and to the hand. They smack of the enchanted past, and the best thing about them is that they usually are good. Owning a room full of old stuff gathered by purchase from here and there is not as distinguished, however, as having one's own inherited supply, but we can't all do that. Most of our ancestral homes were inflammable, and many never existed.

How I have cursed my antecedents who used bed posts for kindling wood and sold priceless chairs for junk, to supplant them with golden oak. The ramifications and implications of the antique craze are legion. It is a desperate traffic of sack and rapine, wonderful fun for purveyor and collector. Delightful magazines foster the craze and are in turn fostered by it, mutual fuel to a profitable flame.

With wild glee men rush through Spain. They have

nearly emptied Italy, and somehow a Spanish turn has lately been given the arts. They tear from their rightful positions everything that will come away: doors, windows, fountains, panels of tile, balconies, ecclesiastical objects, anything that can be sent over the ocean to our golden shores. It is not unlike the slow destruction of ancient Rome during the thoughtless Middle Ages, which we so deplore, since we have none of it left to-day. The streets of our cities are dotted with alluring shops of the dealers in antiques, in whose windows shine little arrangements of furniture and objets d'art. They appeal to us so much that we stand with our backs to the noisy street of today and press our noses to the glass through which we gaze upon the past resting in its well-earned peace. There is nothing so strong as an appeal to sentiment with its almost moral guarantee. The world as it is not is a lovely garden where according to our degree of development we welter in tears of felicity. When our Puritan ancestors made those sturdy pieces of furniture for which we today pay a price, one tenth of which represents the actual value of the piece and the other nine tenths the value of the dream it conjures up, they were experiencing an era of existence in which life particularly wore an aspect of stern reality. Much of the fear of God went into the fabrication of what were necessities, the difference being that in those days necessities were handmade and according to a simple tradition which guaranteed their beauty. We are not today, to any great degree, mindful of the fear of God.

And for the majority, necessities are so smoothly taken care of that we are free to play. This traffic, which has reached the point we call a "craze," in the respectable implements of our doughty forebears, approaches the ridiculous.

Next door to the shop filled with Colonial furniture is one in whose windows the exotic creations of baroque Spain exude a dangerously delicious sense of decadence, the sensuous appeal of melting form and ripe color. It is like taking snuff. The 18th century did not confine itself entirely to fighting Indians for the salvation of one's soul. It went very gracefully down hill in certain places so that such places produced an art which has been for many years shunned, because it was shocking. It was as impossible for us to appreciate it as for dear Aunt Mary to fetch a round laugh over Rabelais. As slowly we have learned to unbend a little, some of the excellent qualities of baroque art have become discernible. Apologies have been written for it and we have been invited to step-up and have a look to convince ourselves, never minding a whiff of brimstone. Of course there never was anything the matter with baroque art as art. It was and is very accomplished technically and of a charming superficial beauty.

Today it sells well and some prefer to trick out an apartment in canary yellow, garnet velvet and cold green silk, with garlands of "amorini" and flowers, and an anguishing crucifix. There is no question over its being delicious, only one should walk from it into a

leafy park or step into a swaying coach. The wrench of leaving it for the roar of traffic-jammed streets is sickening. It is bound to keep one discontented, as it is a cult and casts a spell.

It all shows that people are thinking artistically in dead terms. One picks up one of the popular periodicals of the day, the kind dealing with architecture and the decorative arts, in which photography plays the leading rôle. One soon makes the discovery that the whole subject matter is confined to the cant and patter of "period." The highest recommendation is conveyed only by the strictest conformity with idiosyncrasies of style. Such and such a room is not beautiful for any fundamental reasons, but it is paneled in chestnut in the Elizabethan style, hence it is understood to be good. It is very safe because it has a label. It comes in a good old can of a reputable brand just like salmon or sardines. Had Shakespeare today asked us "What's in a name?" there would come in a mighty roar the word, "everything."

The large manufacturers of furniture and textiles are controlled by "period" policy. Across the water this is no longer true. In Paris the great department stores possess their own ateliers for the production of up-to-date materials, but here one sees the same everlasting repetitions of bedroom suites, dining-room suites, over-stuffed living-room sets, each definitely ascribed to its ridiculous place in history. How amusing it would be were our clothes dealers to do likewise, if we gazed at window displays which would draw the

sting from those gesticulating pink-and-white wax figures garbed in the raiment of the day. There would be armor, doublet and hose, the lace ruffles and wigs of cavalier days, laces and brocades of the 18th century and purple togas, from which to select at random. It would make a fine game indeed, and maybe a not unprofitable one, for certainly in respect to the male attire, we have fallen upon hard times. The long trouser is a problem as is the "collar and tie" and the troublesome hat. By the laws of natural selection, those blind creatures existing at the bottom of the deep sea have put away color since it may not be seen, and substitute little lanterns to aid them in the hard search for food. Men today seem in a similar plight, crawling blindly in the depths of the unplumbed industrial sea, unlovely to look upon and equipped with the same little lights.

If it would appear ridiculous for us to go garbed, some as Romans, some as gentlemen of the court of Charles V. or Crusaders, why is it not equally ridiculous to move against a setting just as inconsistent from the same point of view? What difference is there in reality between donning rapier and lace, and sitting down to dine in a paneled room of the Elizabethan era? The person about to build a house goes to the architect usually with the primary stipulation that it shall be in this or that style. The same person visiting his tailor would hesitate to order a suit of chain mail, yet the reasons for the existence of one of the styles of the past

are as outworn as is the necessity for chain mail.

New materials and new forces must inevitably show and express themselves. Can they do so through the medium of Egypt, Greece, or fifteenth-century France? An interesting demonstration of this appears in the evolution of the electric light fixture. We are still placing small electric bulbs made to look like candle flames upon the ends of imitation candles. It is a clear demonstration of the erring steps by which transition is affected from one stage to another. The electric candle is an anomaly, and we are beginning to discover direct and logical ways of applying the undimmed brilliance of electric light to the needs of interior lighting through concealment of the bulb and reflection of its rays in a soft and moderated glow.

The reason for our fear of appearing in the costume of the past is conservatism, the fear of being different. The reason for our fear to appear in anything but the architecture or decoration of the past is likewise conservatism. The interior of a house faithfully carried out in the Italian manner is in reality a fancy dress ball.

It has certainly been sufficiently demonstrated that we are no longer hostile to the advances made by painters, writers, dramatists, scenic designers and musicians along the way of modernism. In these fields art has already begun to find new expression. It is well within memory that the bombshell of cubism was exploded in our midst greatly to our scorn and merriment. Yet today in nearly any gallery one will find

exposed for sale the work of men who followed in that path. Almost without exception our young painters have broken with the petrified formulae of the past and are breathlessly pursuing that new spirit which is putting back into painting, in a new guise, those qualities of structure, volume, and texture long since lost or hopelessly eclipsed by sentiment or realism. We welcomed the stage sets of Bakst introduced with the Russian Ballet, and have seen their influence fairly revolutionize the art of stage setting. The intelligent mind could not remain unconvinced in the presence of a successful effort to simplify and attain effect by finding an interpretive relation for the setting to the play.

Commercial architecture has indeed made giant strides since the extraordinary demand for size and height and the corresponding development of new materials have made the slavish following of any set style almost impossible, not but what we still strive to rig tall buildings with pilasters and cornice and make Gothic factories. In domestic work, architects are less bold. The skyscraper is something new, and has more readily formed an individual expression. Man's habitation remains much what it always has been, with the addition of luxury, and the temptation to let it trail comfortably behind is strong. In Europe this is not so if we consider for example the interesting if only partially successful attempts of the Spanish in Catalonia. As design approaches the province of the home it balks.

Some one has suggested that our position as Americans, without the background our transatlantic neighbors are fortunate enough to possess, makes the memory of the past doubly dear to us, a reason for our clinging to it, while the European having perhaps seen too much of it is more ready to make his home in a new way.

If this be the case, the blame for our backward views must be laid at the door of the man with the house to build and furnish, and not to the producer of the eventual house and furniture. If the purchaser remain conservatively unmoved, the manufacturer will be at a loss to attempt an advance.

It is interesting to note, however, that all the larger houses making furniture and textiles do in the course of the year produce, practically at their own expense, a certain very limited amount of goods of modern tendency. The cost of this is ascribed to advertising and the result a mere drop in the bucket, but it shows they are alive to the possibilities of new method and new design and are waiting for the tide to turn. Certain it is that the retailer controls the manufacturer and will allow him to produce only what can be profitably sold to the public. Would the public buy something new? The chances are it might, as it has in the case of other things. It is the retail buyers' unwillingness to risk not showing a profit which in turn controls the retail market, and possibly represents the weak point in a vicious circle.

Outside a small amount of imported stuff on sale

at enterprising shops, chiefly in the big cities of the East and Middle West, it is safe to say that industrially, that is, on a basis of quantity production, practically nothing modern is being done in this country today. New methods of designing are being taught in some schools of design and one may see the results of competitions in which the work of students is wholly modernistic in its tendency, but none of this seems to find its way into actual production. There are of course numbers of individual artists working in wood, iron, pottery and ceramics whose small and excellent output is occasionally met with, but who do not produce on a scale (nor at a price) sufficient to attract popular attention. A widespread popularity of modernism in this field may only be hoped for when wholesale manufacturers are permitted to produce, and at an attractive price, goods enough to arrest the attention of the wholesale democratic American eye.

And there is no possible reason to suppose that this will not eventually happen. If, of course, one believes that we will soon give up being our modern selves, and fall back upon some ancient manner of living, which any let-up would amount to, then of course the pains of writing this book are for nought. But has history ever shown that the race relinquishes knowledge once gained? We may have discarded from a full hand, but we have retained the essence in the stem of growth.

The entire responsibility for disposing of the enormous quantities of articles manufactured rests with the

cunning of the advertising man. If today he does not succeed in distancing his competitors by a superior appeal to the tender emotions or humor of the public, his sales sheet will show a loss. This game once started cannot be dropped, and it costs the unsuspecting public a terrific number of dollars every year. Yet, so clever are the promulgators of this hokum, that you will hear the victims themselves clamoring in support of a movement which has, as is said, standardized products. A fetish of symbols and slogans seems to be temporarily taking the place of normal supply and demand. A credo of cleverness exists which derives delight from and patronizes any feat of distortion.

Fake science sells well; if you suggest to a man that he is sick he will buy almost anything you may put into a bottle and offer to him as a remedy for the ailment you have made him suspect he has. This is easily done. A few large words, a catch phrase or two and a distressing picture are all that is necessary to worry the average intellect into making an extravagant fool of itself. If we believe, as man always has believed, that health may be purchased, surely more of it can be had at greater expense today than ever before. The matter of brushing one's teeth is relatively simple. Other interests should be paramount to the intelligent mind. Yet the multiplicity of tooth powders or tooth pastes, and the dozen and one controversial claims given wide publicity by one manufacturing concern after another, tend to keep this not over-important aspect of daily

hygiene far to the front in man's mind. The utopia, however, of those who have fallen beneath the spell of nursing their newly discovered teeth must in the end give way to grievous disillusionment when they stop and reflect that the number of advertising dentists also increases from day to day.

All of the new cant and patter anent health is of course not nonsense, yet, one does not see how we can expect to fortify and sustain a great race by merely prolonging its life and propping its weaknesses, while such matters as fundamental stamina are left to deteriorate through a suicidal policy which allows unfit individuals not only to drag out miserable existences, but also to propagate their kind.

The presence of so much advertising of a misleading sort, sugar-coated with alluring illustrations, more or less good as to artistic quality, must from the very insistence of its presence, exert an influence profound enough to be discernible in our other arts. Through shrewdly taking advantage of the weakness of humanity, by appeals to the sentiments in order to sell, advertising fosters the cult of the unreal, and deadens any effort to be honest. This is deadly to the progressive creative spirit since that cannot be nourished on illusion but must have its roots in truth before it may grow. Advertising gives us a steady blast of good, cheerful fact distortion. Its object as far as art is concerned is to sell. It shows us, when need for a decorative setting arises, the glories of old England, her halls and

parks, or the gravity of the French château, on an elegant scale always. Flights of fancy are made upon wings of dollar bills, and they fly backward.

French advertising does not do this. It makes a clever, spirited and often naughty appeal far from the lugubrious seriousness we know. You can't fool the French. They know it is a game, and it must be avowedly so, and amusing to boot. This is on a basis of reality and more progressive. Much of their advertising has high artistic merit and suggests the future of art while it employs the most advanced terms.

Such is our position today. Slowly we are emerging from the doldrums of artistic decadence. And slowly, as the immortal urge to create beauty, latent in man, comes to avail itself of the machine, to understand its spiritual significance, and with it the soul of industrialized democracy—slowly we shall have our own art, no longer a thing of the dead and buried past, nor a new mantle borrowed from our European cousins, but beauty after the pattern of our national individuality.

CHAPTER IV

Industrial Democracy and Art

IT MUST BE EXPECTED THAT AMERICAN ART OF THE future will be a reflection of democracy. Our experiment in this form of government has now endured long enough for us to have begun to discover what happens when the doctrine of political equality becomes more than a dream. It is time we began to take on the appearance of a democratically controlled institution which has been in operation for some hundred and fifty years. Athens in the days of her glory was a democratically controlled, or uncontrolled, institution, which fact may augur well for our artistic future. The difference exists that humanity has meanwhile invented much to complicate and detract from the direct benefits deriving from a state of free equality. When industrial democracy comes to have artistic expression, intrinsically its own, what will it resemble? What will the architecture and decoration that parallel cubism and post-impressionism look like?

Strange to say, when the people become the patrons of their own art, that art seems to suffer. This sounds paradoxical, for one would say: "Now we may have just what we want." But may we? Have we just what we want in any other department of living as a result of being "free and equal"?

The change in the condition of the artist and his art consequent to discovering that he must now market his own wares, that he must in other words *be no longer*

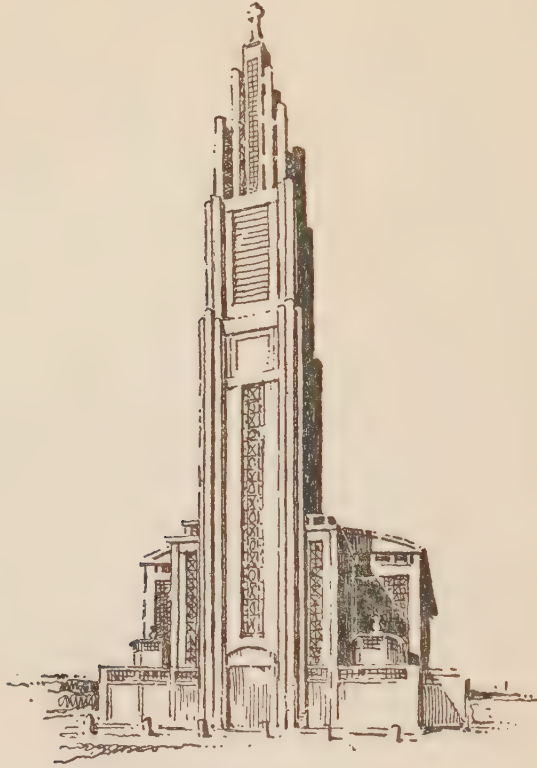


FIG. 19—NOTRE DAME DE RAINCY

judged by his peers, cannot help but be profound. In the good old days he was usually under the patronage of some wealthy and cultivated individual or institution who commanded his wares of him before they

were executed. Often he spent his entire life in the position of artistic adviser or priest of the muses to a family of rank.

Rank in those days conferred also the obligation of culture, such as there was, and rough as may have been his life in many respects, the gentleman of other days, inured to beautiful surroundings since infancy, retained an uncorrupted discernment in matters of taste. He was in many cases actually an amateur of one of several of the arts and a shrewd critic of all. What else had he to occupy himself with aside from love-making and warfare, both of which have elements of beauty and demand skill? For if the outward garb of warfare be unbeautiful, its essence, which is courage, we revere above all things because it is strong and free. Was not the golden age of Pericles an evocation of the glory of manly triumph?

Hence the old aristocrat was fine if crude. If he neglected his bath and ate with his fingers, he washed them, when he did so, from an exquisite ewer and bowl, the work of a master craftsman, and ate his meat from a golden plate. We today turn on the tap every half hour, and keep ourselves so immaculate that we wash off much fine matter.

There is nothing to breed distinction in observing the operation of a shower bath, but much in observing the silver stream from a beautifully shaped silver vessel.

Those days are over, and our task is precisely to find what beauty exists in the shower bath, what sort of

aristocrat, in a word, the environment of today is in process of producing.

The artist of other days worked under a benevolent despot. He enjoyed freedom in bondage and he had rarely to worry about who should buy his work when it was done. If he enjoyed poverty, he enjoyed it in as much peace as his wife would allow him. He enjoyed at least the comfort of a meager living while he worked for people capable of appreciating his best efforts. He was not the mysterious risqué person we conjure up today when the name artist is spoken, precisely because we as a nation remain as yet innocent of aristocracy. Just when our democratized populace will be raised to a condition of aristocracy, with nothing but moving pictures, shower baths, phonographs, Sunday papers and advertising to help, it is hard to say, and we must always remember that the entire mass must be leavened, all together.

Today, however, art has ceased to function under patronage except in rare instances. Few if any artists enjoy safe and serene livings unless they have industrialized themselves, a heavy price to pay. For the rest, living has become a matter of selling their wares, and artists are not as a rule gifted with the commercial sense. The two are hardly ever found beneath the same roof, and when they are, you may be sure one of them is cramped. So a broker, or person who sells the artist's wares, has come into existence.

It is the economic limitation of the art dealer that



Courtesy of New York Public Library

FIG. 20—THIRTEENTH CENTURY AFRICAN WOOD SCULPTURE



Courtesy of New York Public Library

FIG. 21—THIRTEENTH CENTURY AFRICAN WOOD SCULPTURE

he must please the public to a point where it will buy, since his berth is not that of philanthropist. He is also in competition with other dealers. He is, in other words, that same retail buyer we have mentioned, who cannot afford to offer the public something they may not buy, but whose services have become an inevitable condition now that society no longer absorbs its art through direct patronage of the artist.

It is one of the direct results of our practice of democracy that the bourgeois who is the backbone of the system, be he rich or poor, is the one to be pleased in the matter of art. Knowing it to be safe as well as comforting, he naturally hangs on to the past. Constitutionally we are free and equal. This indicates freedom simply in our right, not our ability, to exercise our judgment. And being perfectly free to have any opinion we choose, we have none, except that the precedents of the past are infallible.

The average citizen is obviously not in a position to constitute an excellent judge of art, for which rôle a certain amount of preparation is necessary—yet he hates to be shown. His general artistic position is improved over what it may have been in the past, in all matters save this, but in this his inadequacies of inheritance and education have betrayed him. He will only be shown, if at all, by such agency as his own civic museums which he supports and may be proud of. And here again it is of the past only that he learns. Thus freedom has engendered conservatism in the man in-

capable of judgment, but unwilling to give up his constitutional and inalienable right in this direction.

The artist on his side enjoys this same privilege of equality and freedom. When he thinks, he becomes contemptuous of his jury, the public whom he must please in order to dispose of his wares but whom he knows to be a jury totally incapable of its task of judging him, or of grasping the meaning of something new.

Some painters, sculptors, and poets have wearied at length and bolted this condition of intolerable restraint, led as ever by the heroism of a few pioneers.

They were free to do so, free of tradition, which has gone on the rocks, and free of the influence of such academic regulation as the old school of patronage imposed. In hot revolt from the repetition of worn-out formulae, they turned to objects as they are about one in life, and to the causes lying behind these objects, light, color, and form. These they examined in the light of modern reason with its newly acquired data.

The result of this revolt has been impressionism, cubism, post-impressionism, expressionism, vorticism, and so on. Without attempting to go further, it is still safe to say that here we have something modern, and what is more, something which, if it be anything, is art. It is based upon strictly modern sources, the same sources which supply interest in the daily life of the average citizen, not upon what interested his grandfather.

In other words, the artist, in renouncing the past, has

begun to speak the unadorned tongue of the day, the tongue, if you will, of the average man, surrounded by science, business, noise and hurry. And yet is he further than ever from his goal, popular favor, which, if he does despise, he equally needs.

Never has the pioneer in art been more thoroughly repudiated, by public and critic alike. Never has he been less understood and more derided. Accused of being a sensational freak, over-individualistic, insincere, they tackle him on moral grounds and as a charlatan. Few appreciate that he, the artist, is at last on their side, working at their own dear game of being up to date.

Music slides into the ear with less questioning than painting does into the eye. Jazz "gets by," as they say, with the man who ignores, or jeers at, the work of the modern artist. We hate what we fear and we fear what we do not comprehend.

The funny thing is that modern painting is designed for the understanding of the modern man far more than is ancient painting. It has added to painting just that something we have today discovered which was not arrived at in the past. Today we see for the first time a new type of speed boat, a strange misshapen thing making a devil of a noise and we grasp and worship it at a glance. We see something equally up to date in the matter of art and back away.

But the tide has turned and we need not ask: When will it dawn upon us that we have at last something our

own, something growing in beauty?—for it has already happened. Democracy has in practice held back taste but promoted the artist. The ice-barrier of uncritical bourgeois conservatism must melt with a little flattery, which it is getting. Artists are saying to it, "Some of this modern mess you have created and never stop to analyze is really beautiful."

But it was not the populace who seized upon and first hailed their new art. There was no repetition of that moving spectacle when Florence paraded the streets to acclaim Cimabue the resurrector of painting. The parallel of that demonstration is found in the welcome accorded those first hardy men who flew over the North Pole. We still do that sort of thing in this country, but for another cause.

In America it took the trained eyes of those initiated and confirmed in the old order to first discern the meaning and beauty of that new art which was to set the seal to the cherished past. Theirs was a truly heroic conversion, "noblesse oblige." Aside from its sporadic occurrence as a cult or fad among those habitually bored with life's face value, one will discover modern art being seriously collected and enjoyed by the supposedly hide-bound professors of our universities, everywhere in fact by the high-minded and visionary. It is significant that modern verse in this country should have taken its cue from the sister of the president of our oldest and most hallowed university.

A temporary aspect has been given to modern life,



Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

FIG. 22—STILL LIFE

By Cézanne



Courtesy of "The Arts"

FIG. 23—STONE SCULPTURE, BY CONSTANTIN BRANCUSI

By Constantin Brancusi

the life that all save a few of us are forced to lead, by the altered structure of society. The shifting of population as well as the terrific expense of sustaining this shift, due to industrialism, has profoundly altered us as human beings. Life seems to have become fragmentary, a thing to be caught at in passing. Few deny that the family as an institution is on the wane. And with the passing of the family there passes also the homestead, the place of the family, the sun of a universe of brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins, all revolving about it and enjoying, or accepting, its warmth and light. Once we were members of a family, not individuals. The families were the units of society. Now it is ourselves, ever more and more, who are becoming the individuals, as if the family had lost its gravity and liberated us as meteors flying through uncharted space, no longer revolving in orderly groups about the wisdom of the elders.

Whatever the "cost of living" may be, it is that, together with congestion in one place and draining off in another, which has reduced the scale of living. It is no longer possible for the average member of society to sustain the cost of a home, and there is nothing to encourage him to do so; a home, that is, in the former generous sense. The new type of abode is either a very small house, erected at great expense, or a suite of rooms anywhere from ten to one hundred feet in the air, reached by a new vertical means of rapid transit, the elevator.

The space into which the old familiar home furnishings must be introduced is considerably lessened. A small six or seven room house will not hold the amount of furniture formerly considered necessary and leave room for the few individuals who inhabit it. Lack of retainers, whose function has been assumed by what are now called modern conveniences, makes the upkeep of a large establishment with numerous objects to be cleaned, dusted and polished, a difficult matter.

As well as the spirit of the home, we see that the actual size and shape of the average house has changed and that a decrease in the size and number of the pieces of furniture to be introduced into it becomes necessary. Instead of the old-fashioned house in which there were living room, library, reception room, dining room, etc., we now have, in the majority of cases, the functions of all of these consolidated into two and in some cases one room, with the kitchen as a small adjunct. This is more nearly true of those who live in apartments in the cities than of the dweller in a small suburban home. In many apartments the dining room has become a dining alcove, an excellent solution of the problem of having a dining and living room in one. If there is not the luxury of space in such an arrangement, that luxury will be discovered to have transferred itself to the bathroom, the kitchen, the cellar or the sleeping porch. It is a luxury of many appliances that we seem to relish rather than the ancient ambition to have space about one. Inex-

haustible hot water is rather to be had than almost anything we can think of.

If we have fireplaces, they are liable to be little, unused-looking things, outgrown in our existence, like our tails, but in the cellar you will be sure to find a practically perfect furnace. This furnace will with almost human intelligence keep the house at an even temperature, make no dust nor dirt and, with the increased use of oil, refuel itself. Hence, if one can afford it, one may be sure of continuous and abundant heat, with no trouble whatever, much as those who live in southern lands enjoy the sun. Such an outfit is preferable to the old-fashioned fireplace with its meager supply of ill-distributed heat, half of which went up the chimney, and which had ever to be fed and watched. This relegation of the fireplace to the pathetic condition of an adornment is one of the saddest passages in our modern transformation of the world. How we loved our fires, the fires that used to flicker at night in our aboriginal caves! There was comfort for the soul in an open fire. And yet at the beginning of its career the fireplace was a luxury, and then as man became dependent upon it, a necessity. What a mighty part the hearth has played in the history of the race! Hearth and home have been bracketed as have bed and board, the four constituting the essential needs of mankind. Today hearth and home are on the wane, and if bed is not, at least board is undergoing a great transformation. One hesitates to prophesy what will be the psy-

chological effect of the disappearance of the fireside from our environment. Yet the peace and serenity and the peculiar benefits of fire heat seem almost as unwanted today as the horse and buggy. To supplant it we have the radiator for heat and the electric bulb for light. Dreams were bred in the flickering light of an open fire. There are few places to dream today, and little time for doing it. This change has been unerring and inevitable. It is logical to suppose that the race will adapt itself to what it has wanted and obtained just as in similar instances in the past.

In the question of how furniture and decoration can keep pace with the development of steam heat and electricity, economy of space and money would seem the chief factors, for as the new luxuries become necessities, which they soon do, they eat up the money which formerly afforded space. There is good reason to suppose that as the old order breaks down, and as we come more and more to living as individuals and not families, what corresponded to the home will be nothing more than a curiously contrived room in which there may be no movable furniture whatever. It is no more than the *reductio ad absurdum* of the argument by which we are progressing along all roads. There may be no window, but plenty of air and light. Bed and board will be built into the walls to appear at the summons of a push button! But before we get there, if ever we do, there will be this transitional phase we are today embarked upon.

Our furniture must consist of a few pieces, small in size, and perhaps combining several functions. It will have to be inexpensive, for most of us at least, and this cannot be if we go on buying the kind of furniture produced when there were time and money to be spent on contour, inlay and carving. Besides, machines do not inlay and carve with any feeling. Chippendale, Sheraton and Hepplewhite are out of the picture. Their works were the product of another economic age and the extravagant cost of reproducing their handmade intricacies is prohibitive. It is to use the machine stupidly to cause it to dishonor fine things done in the past. The machine can produce just what we want, if we will remove obstructions and inhibitions. It can attain perfect miracles of veneer. All it asks is that you require of it nothing which should be done by man, nothing into which something of the human soul must enter to give it value. The vilest thing I have ever seen was a mechanically operated violin. Here was the climax of the crime of intelligent man, master of a powerful and inanimate machine. The wretched wailing of that sensitive and beautiful instrument, preyed upon, violated by cogwheels and revolving shafts, protested to the entire world.

Flat surfaces made in beautiful proportion and beautifully finished I see as the future of wood furniture. Of course metal itself will come more and more to the fore, as we become accustomed to it. Many of us today pass our waking hours in metal buildings which have

superseded those of stone and wood. Color too will come to play a more important part. It hardly plays any part at all in the embellishment of furniture such as we are accustomed to, but it may displace much elaborate imitation carving, a miserable subterfuge made of composition and stuck on. Such color decoration may be in flat surfaces, particularly if it be applied over sheet metal. In fact the wider use of metal for furniture will bring about an art of all-over decoration based on the use of flat color. Thin slices of the rarest and most exotic woods from strange forests will be laid in rectilinear patterns as veneer on flat surfaces.

Modern furniture has to stand much hard usage. It is in more frequent contact with those moving about small premises and there are fewer whose occupation it is to look after it. Indestructibility will be an asset, and the simpler in form such pieces are, the less they may be injured. If veneers of fine wood are easily scratched, at least layers of hard paint are not easily marred. Metal objects should last forever, and how beautiful they may be is seen in what the Spaniards did in taming and domesticating iron. The instability of the modern menage gives rise to much moving about, from place to place, and few pieces of furniture, economical of space and unbreakable, will be an advantage. Gone are the days of the great clothes presses, wardrobes, and sideboards. They were made to fit a given place in an establishment and to stay put.

The whole trend of the day is toward minimizing the

importance of the old fixed state of human dwelling on this earth. Houses are less important than motor cars, and furniture less again than hot water, thermostats and scientific kitchens. Utility and mobility we seek. We had rather be moving rapidly from Providence to Spokane in a motor car than sitting before a fire reading. We are at last able to satiate the old human craving for movement, heritage from our nomadic ancestors, deadened through drab ages of sedentary advance along the paths of worldly wisdom, while our restlessness slept and our muscles grew smaller. Now once again we may all move about over the face of the earth, without motive, coming and going, prowling. And we do that, even the best of us, somewhat apologetically of course. What is the temptation to stay in an apartment or noisy hotel when we may be out on the road? Demoted from our primitive wanderlife, we again fare forth, seated now and rolling rapidly. Why should we not wander motiveless, restlessly? Must we every moment have some high praiseworthy goal? Would we learn any more seated at home, bored or reading the Sunday paper than wandering the face of the earth in a banner-decked Ford observing the live movement of the rest of our fellows, bent also upon roving, acquainting ourselves again with out-of-doors?

How wearisome do those become who continually complain of the unsightly results of man's first stages in learning some new trick! It is not necessary to have every moment a God-sanctioned motive. The clarifying

results of a new and fresh contact with life while we let slip some of the time-honored lore, may be just what is needed to make life bearable again. Occasionally situations become so complicated that only a period of oblivion will permit our continuing the game. May we not perhaps look upon this period of auto, radio, song and dance, as one of those necessary relaxations, no matter how it excites the philosophers and the righteous-minded? It will last some time, till it finds its own new balance.

No, the art of the Georges, of Louis XV. or St. Louis will not suffice as a background for such a performance. We have invited every nation in the world, until recently, to a sort of picnic on virgin soil, with machines to play with and the sky alone to limit every resource. It is futile to say that we have accomplished nothing. We have accomplished more in less time than has ever been done before. But with no limits set, we have gotten at length into rather deep water. The Europeans who roll their eyes when remembering our existence, have had no such picnic. Not having gone so fast, since 1800, when things began to take on the modern look, they have less of a headache. Yet that very balance they have perforce maintained, in having in their midst a past to be respected, has produced a more logical growth of art, which means a more consistent advance along all paths.

We have lagged way behind in thought and art while we have madly pursued and nearly conquered the machine. There was nothing to temper us, no one to tell



Courtesy of "The Architectural Record"

FIG. 24-RUG

By Maurice Dufrêne

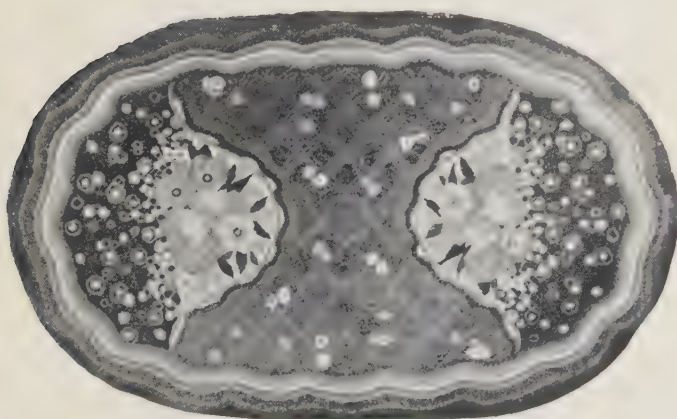


FIG. 25-RUG

By Haraug



Courtesy of Cheney Brothers

FIG. 26—MODERN STAINED GLASS

us no. All our growing energy has gone into producing one extraordinary blossom, red, purple and yellow and shaped like a fire engine and now they tell us we should be ashamed of it.

Our refined sages who point with scorn to their inevitable environment, meet the situation by holding a continuous costume ball in its midst, the ostrich with its head in the ground. If there be not beauty in life, where else can it be found? And we have plenty of life about us.

The Puritans were the last people to have a good time on our soil. They had something to die for and a grand fight for life. They were continually from morn till night in contact with life as it is, its issues of love, food, faith and death. Not until later were their arts and crafts particularly subtle or accomplished, but they were sound, based on then and there. We want that today. We crave to be based on here and now, only we can't find footing in the confusion. We have little contact with real life. Our toys distract us and confuse our minds. We have forgotten the solace of beauty and when nervously and as a by-product we try to produce it, it only has the form of what somebody else once did. We envy the men of the Middle Ages who raised beautiful cathedrals to God as if they grew there. When will our democracy and our industrialism permit us to begin the erection of our own extraordinary monument?

In the past, art, architecture and the minor arts have reflected man's faith in life through God. The Middle

Ages produced little which was unrelated in some manner to the Christian faith. These great cathedrals are merely symbols of man's gratitude to heaven for a guarantee of peace of mind.

When we become more articulate and have relinquished restrictive formulae of the past, it is to be expected that we may evolve new dogmas as the inevitable accompaniment to a yet nebulous faith. And our art will partake of this faith. Our condition today is exactly expressive of our present poverty of faith. We have great facilities for expression and apparently little or nothing to express. If art appears to have no soul it is because little soul has yet come forward to be expressed.

Our doing is little more than an expenditure of energy, like youth at play, and things with childish significance become our goal. Still, in this process we broaden our acquaintance with new data and materials which must one day find a motivating spirit. We are beginning to find that spirit today and it is the joy of unfettered life.

Indeed this is not an age of faith. Yet man is incapable of life without faith. If he must surrender the cherished tenets learned in childhood, when will he find the new articles of faith whereby he may be guaranteed some measure of spiritual consolation? There seems as yet little upon our horizon in which we may place such hope. Imagine the desolation of the simple savage when some one of superior intelligence appears and with im-

punity smashes the savage's venerated idol before his very eyes.

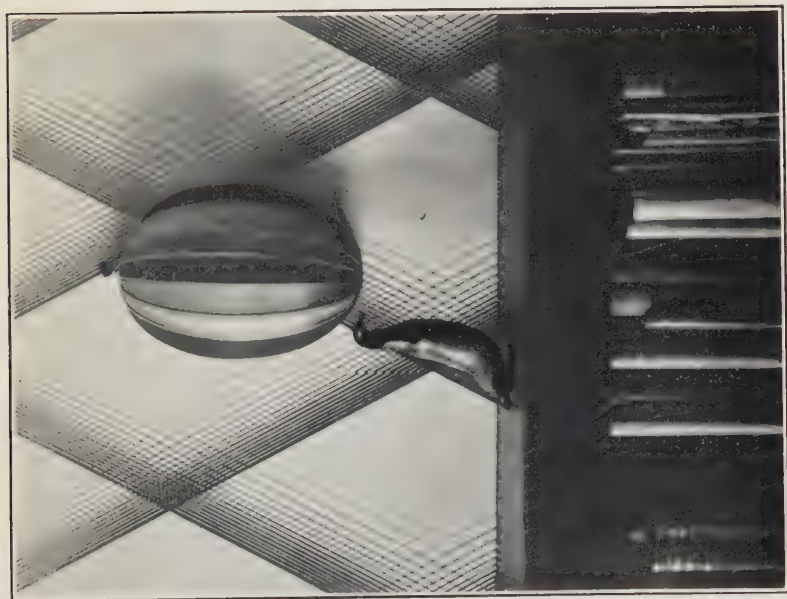
Without his fully comprehending that this is what has happened, it is at the same time the intellectual position of the man in the street today. His bridges burned, ruthlessly, under him without his instrumentality, he is adrift upon an interesting, but shallow sea of ill-assorted fact. Yet, man's insatiable desire for something to believe, something to take part of the responsibility for his living from his weary shoulders, will continue to lead him on. If he can no longer be satisfied in the acceptance of some beautiful and plausible system of truths, he must pursue his search in the new hard way, at the mercy of the hot sunlight of scientifically exact reasoning. His pathetic envy of the simplicity of the savage mind is seen in the recent vogue for African wood carving.

The miracles taught us by the promulgators of our ancient religions have been superseded in the disillusioned mind by the miracles of modern science, at once more entertaining and apparently more applicable to those material needs, which constitute our salient interest today. Man himself has accomplished the performance of miracles, and what wonder that the simple mind should turn unconsciously from the miracle of the sacraments to the miracle of the aeroplane conquering the air? Hitherto the world has been run on a basis of faith. This has proven an adequate and comforting system for the guaranteeing of spiritual satisfaction to

mankind. Now, however, with a dangerous tool, science, we are able to detect some of the factual fallacies contained within our erstwhile faiths. An almost tragic disillusionment is being suffered by those who understand at once too much and too little of the results of this process.

Some reaction upon art must also be expected from the results of a scientific approach to life. The aftermath of Bacon's great discovery has at length borne such fruit as has become part of the everyday existence of modern man.

It is becoming apparent that this plunge into realms of unexplored matter, and in particular man's unexplored mind, has resulted in confusion caused by a plethora of undigested or unapplied fact. In the endeavor to summarize and apply to the question of modernism in art, all of the changes in our daily life, mental as well as physical, the exploration of that mysterious territory lying between subjective and objective reality has been of great significance. Today, in the pursuit of psychology, we are seeking, with the aid of scientific method, to plumb the mechanism of the human mind, dispelling and throwing down many of the old fixed stars of faith, by which men were wont to lay their course through life. It is a new and valiant attempt to recommence the search for positive truth in this world. Not until we have discovered something of the workings of the complicated machinery of our mentality, through which we attempt to discover truth,



Courtesy of Miss De Pinna

FIG. 27—WALL-PAPER AND LIGHTING FIXTURE IN
APARTMENT OF MISS DE PINNA



Courtesy of Professor Charles Richards

FIG. 28—LIGHTED TOWER OF POLISH PAVILION,
PARIS EXPOSITION OF 1925



FIG. 29—THE NEW ZIEGFELD THEATER

By Joseph Urban



Courtesy of the Fred F. French Company

FIG. 30-ERECTING THE FRED F. FRENCH BUILDING ON FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY

The building takes beautiful form through simply expanding within its zoning envelope

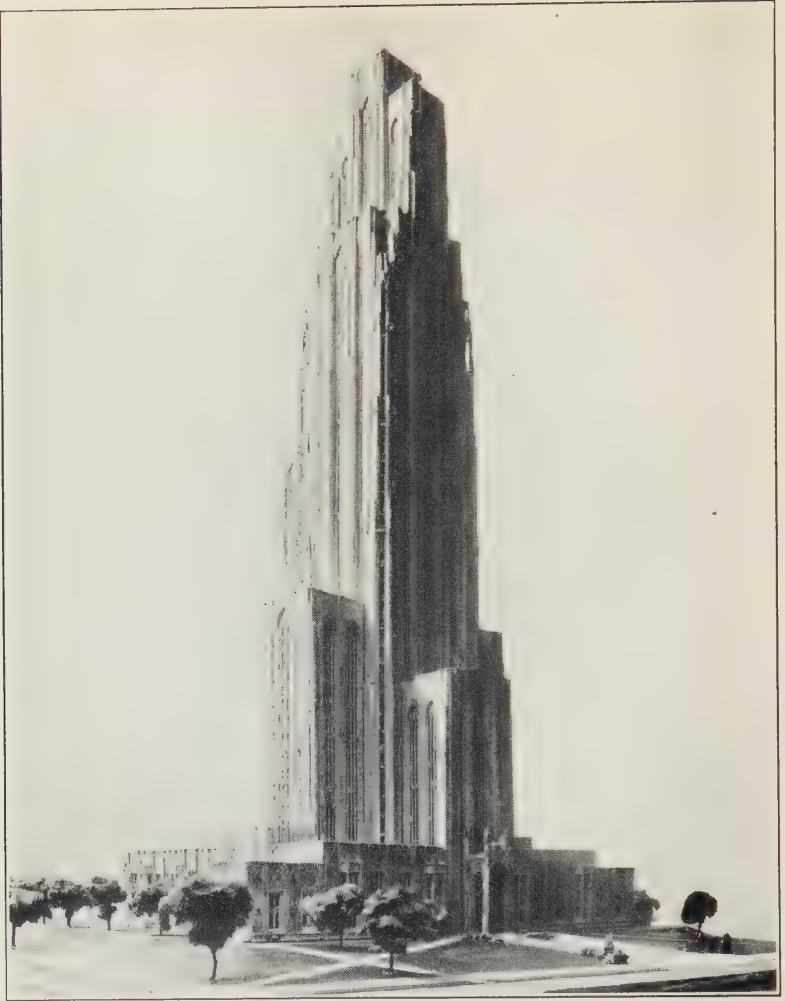


FIG. 31—CATHEDRAL OF LEARNING

By Charles Z. Klauder

will we know much as to the validity of such results as we may have obtained.

We are undergoing a transition from a condition of believing what could not be questioned, to one of doubting now that questioning is possible. Yet the questioning has proven little save that there may be many planes of existence.

We all like stark facts today, although of course we keep bolting them nervously, only to return with renewed interest. The way the world really works, the mechanisms of our minds, the heavenly bodies, all are impellingly fascinating. It is this feeling we will find in decorative art, so expressed as to form a setting for the trend of our spiritual lives, just as the mid-Victorian parlor expressed a penchant for mournful and affecting thoughts.

The illustrations, Figs. 7, 8, and 9, reveal precisely this. The decorative appurtenances are there as we like them, impersonal, true in their self-revelation. They do not interfere with us nor offer any sentiment before we ourselves have read it into them. Facts lie on the surface for us to construe as pleases us. No secret of material or process exists, just as in life today there is little we may not know, at least compared with other days. To face truth we need increased independence, a vast truth in itself of fearful import in modern life. The constraint of ties fosters an unreality intolerable to many unable to live longer by rules which seek to interpret life for them. If unable to find truth, we are at least

impelled to flee obscurity. This must proclaim itself in art, for we of a new and different age may not for long endure the constraint of a background, the guiding spirit of which we have already fled.

Man in his new art will reveal the fact that today after countless ages of sophisticating thought, he at length finds himself adrift upon a fathomless ocean which he must explore or perish, sifting the evidence of all time for facts. And now he will weigh truth with new scales.

CHAPTER V

The Tempo of Modern Art

IF PRACTICALLY ALL OF THE MODERNISM WE HAVE so far seen in this country is an importation, what will our own new style come to resemble when it shall have begun to find an articulate spirit of its own? How will our needs for expression differ from the European, with which we are familiar, yet which are not our own?

We have already shown some of the influences which must be mirrored in our national style when that comes about and it now becomes necessary to resolve these factors into something more definite.

As the symbol of our age I conceive a man standing solitary with outstretched arms and face upraised beneath the noon sky. There are no long shadows. Everywhere objects stand revealed pitilessly in the brilliant bath of light. There are few secrets from this light just as there are few that elude the searchlight of modern science, little save the eternal mystery of life, which is the upturned face.

From age to age civilization has added to its material stock in trade. For example, in emerging from the abyss of time, we find man manipulating first stone, then bronze, and finally iron and steel. As a necessary concomitant of this development must there not likewise

run a parallel increase in spiritual capacities, to keep pace with the material? It is as if slowly from age to age man had been occupied in unfolding to the utmost potentiality his senses, absorbing in turn the significance of each new thing his hand and brain stumbled upon.

Most people, when asked how Egyptian art affects them, will reply that its salient aspect exists in the flatness or two-dimensional quality seen in relief work. It is of course foolish to suggest that the Egyptian artist was unacquainted with volume, yet the more we examine his art, his life and system of thought, the more that illusion of flatness gains ground. His heaven was a vague, spherical plane, his earth flat, and his nether world a desert traversed by the sun and his rays in a space of twelve hours. Mighty as are the pyramids and that vast sculptural masterpiece, the Sphinx, still it is the curious quality of these flat reliefs which show that supermastery of line that gives us greatest delight. If not in their art, then in the evolution of their minds one feels they had hardly developed a controlled sense of the third dimension. The backgrounds of their minds were static and flat, as if only dimly comprehending space and time. Naturally this limitation is reflected in their artistic achievements, but as a clarifying restraint and not a deterrent to expression.

The tendency to two-dimensionality is common in Oriental art and particularly in architecture, if we except the Persian and Chinese spheres. An example lies



Photograph by Amemya

FIG. 32—THE BARCLAY-VESEY TELEPHONE BUILDING

McKenzie, Voorhees and Gruelin, Architects

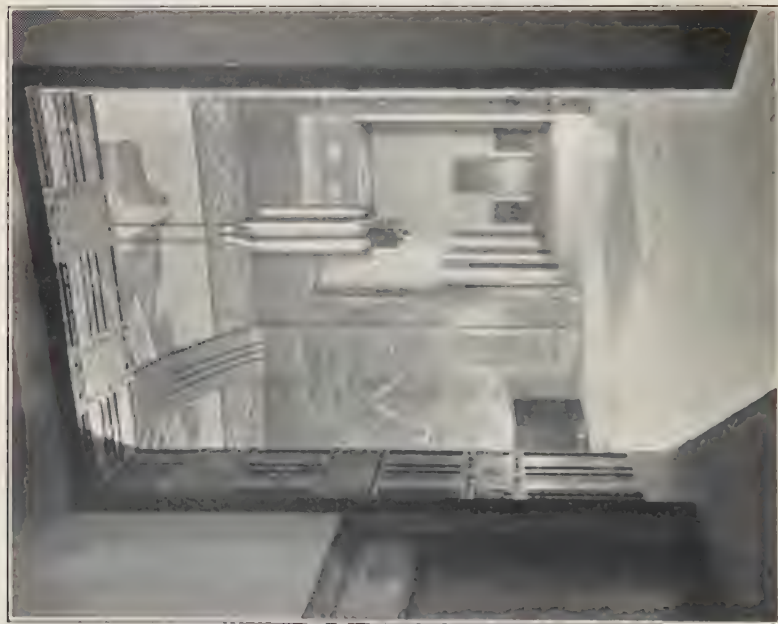


FIG. 33—MAIN CORRIDOR FROM ELEVATOR HALL

The Barclay-Vesey Telephone Building, McKenzie, Voorhees and Gruelin, Architects



FIG. 34—CEILING, ANTEROOM TO DIRECTORS' ROOM

Photograph by Sigurd Fischer

in the uncanny and fantastic piling up of Indian temples, lacking any logical functional or even structural sense. They are more like gracefully silhouetted mountains of intricate stone carving, and show the inability to accomplish profoundly analytical thought, which is the reverse of profoundly intricate speculation. Compare these edifices with the three-dimensional homogeneity of the Parthenon. Indian architecture seems to lack organization, which means the projection of a conceivable plan through time or space. This is precisely what the Greek mind could do, within the limits of its knowledge. The Greek spent five centuries in learning to relate the front to a side of his temple in a way containing meaning. This was the bequest of a sense of mass which we of the West have never forgotten. It is like Aristotle, our point of departure.

The graphic mind is two-dimensional, the philosophic three-dimensional. The Greeks were sculptors and philosophers, the Orientals spinners of beautiful colored threads into marvelous flat patterns.

Again, life is becoming cramped. We can no longer express ourselves satisfactorily within the limitations of three-dimensional space. We seem to feel strange gropings in a new direction, as if that way lay escape from the too great pressure of modern living.

With the need for it, are we slowly unfolding the sense of a new dimension—the fourth dimension? Of the fourth dimension as yet only the most inspired and clairvoyant among us have had fleeting glimpses, con-

tacts made in the unlighted space of mathematics. Our minds are yet unable to retain an impression of its significance.¹ Several times I have seemed to grasp it, yet it has faded from my memory, like a lost musical phrase.

Figures 13 and 14 show two from among a number of French advertisements which, as much as anything may, symbolize the modern spirit. Different, at the same time they share the sense of freedom from a constraining academic past, plus a mechanical impersonal sureness. The figure of the woman expressed in a single broken line says enough and no more. It is elusive without being vague. It is impersonal and removed from the human sphere, while suggesting it, by the symbolizing of the head in a circular segment. By the shading of the line away from a sharp edge, a suggestion of space or of the third dimension is imparted. Also the feeling of a large space containing no more than an outline is suggestive of our fondness for irreducible succinctness, consolidated brevity. It is nearly an abstraction. It is clean, naked, essential line beautiful as is the rippling of water.

Figure 13 is designed to arrest the eye by the bril-

¹Mr. Claude Bragdon is the person who has written most interestingly of the fourth dimension in its architectural and decorative application. He feels with many that science is gradually yielding to mysticism, occultism and psychism, and in the fourth dimension he sees the prophetic fulfillment of his sentiments. In his small volume "Architecture and Democracy," he logically points out the applicability of geometric ornament to the treatment of the modern flat wall expanse. He then proceeds to derive the most beautiful geometric patterns by using his isometric representation, "hypercube" or "tesseract," of four-dimensional space. This is of course motivated by mysticism, but it is not an entirely new phenomenon, since the Moors, whose problems in a way resemble ours, evolved the most intricate geometric designs of a similar nature.

liance of its pattern. The triangle is for some reason a popular modern motive, perhaps because it is the boldest of the areas surrounded by straight lines, having but three sides. With mechanically exact gradations running from black up to white, the horizontal banding of the triangle is set off by letters, white up to black. The black fox's head so cleverly filling the bottom of the triangle has white slit eyes which gleam in the dark. How clever, brief and satisfying it is. The formula it obeys is, if any, that of a fondness for the rich effect of graded bands of color, similar to the spectrum. It is a mechanical principle of color gradation, used pure and unadorned with beautiful effect. There is no more emotional realism to the fox's mask than was expressed in the line, Figure 13. The letters in the name "Heim" are worthy of note. They are childishly simple, strong and delicate. It is registered direct upon the senses without emotional appeal.

In returning to natural sources for our inspiration it is not so much the outward aspect of nature which William Morris chose in his derivations from plant and flower form, as the germ principal of nature herself we seek. It is this which science reveals to us and which we will transmit to our new feeling for structure and decoration.

The elemental forms of things please us and those shapes and colors which seem abstractions of genesis. Our minds have been driven from weary treadmills of philosophy and speculation toward doing, just for the

sake of doing, in a mighty effort to simply learn the technique of handling this vast accumulation of new matter we inherit from science.

In architecture we are already swinging again into the old, true way of working. On all sides we see architectural problems finding new solutions in the sincere application of new structural procedure to new demands, favored by the great opportunity to experiment, which our rush to put up great buildings affords. Architecture is dominant and once more alive in our midst. Demand dictates materials, their use and position, which in turn delimit the location and nature of the decoration. The skyscraper, undoubtedly our most important departure in modern building, owes its appearance strictly to the organic growth of material and need. Gradually the time-honored earmarks of former architectural styles, such as the pilaster and the cornice, are being eliminated from the program and new decorative forms which better grace the structural nature of the whole are taking their place. So once before it was necessary for Gothic architecture to greatly alter or dispense with the classic decorative forms which were no longer fit to more important structural innovations. These buildings are something new under the sun and they are strictly our own development. We see that as they have found the joy of creative progress, they have at once dropped what still clings to our other fields of applied art, the sterile outworn forms of the past. Is it not then safe to predict that so soon as it shall

gain headway, a native development of the other arts and crafts will do the same thing? And when it does, what will be the outcome?

Nothing illustrates to better effect our love of form fitting function than the pleasure to be had in the contemplation of armor. Ages ago the beauties of steel construction were realized by a race of men who developed to the utmost an art of steel design based on functional form. The resemblance between a medieval helmet and a submarine is striking. The beautiful suit of inlaid steel shown in Fig. 15 is the outcome of constant efforts on the part of armorers to evolve a form which should at once afford the greatest protection and convenience to its wearer. The result was, as is ever the case in such an evolution, beauty. Had the maker of this suit ceased from his efforts before adding the embellishment of tooling and inlay, the form alone would have remained beautiful. It is actually sculpture of a very high order, full of the grimness of battle and the dignity of male strength. One is sure that it could not have had any other form and so well served its purpose, nor have been so perfect in its every line from the point of view of beauty. The refinement of contour and surface, and the exquisite decoration have mitigated the harshness of cold metal. Thus furniture of steel will be made and used with increasing abundance as we become used to the possibilities of its refinement.

Dissociated from its romantic appeal, armor is still a thing eternally beautiful. Although the reason for its

existence is long passed, in spirit it remains as essentially modern as a steam turbine or an aeroplane. An helmet is a priceless treasure to the searcher for objects to place against a modern background.

Boats are eternally beautiful objects for the reason that they also, through countless ages of experiment, have finally arrived at a high state of fitness for the performance of their task. Their association with the sea is an additional asset in respect to beauty. Leaving aside steam and gasoline propelled craft, the recent evolution of sailing vessels from the point of view of keen swift sailing is interesting. Swiftmess in craft was a matter of lore and sea wisdom. The designers of the *America*, our first cup defender, relied more on tradition, rule of thumb and sense than upon scientific precision.

Scientific calculation and mathematical exactness have today produced boats which, in that time-honored category of sailing vessels, could sail circles around any ever seen, the *America* included. This is not a mournful fact, it is chiefly beautiful. Compare the *Resolute*, Fig. 35, rerigged as a schooner since beating the *Shamrock* as a sloop, with the *America*. The *America* had a jaunty fast look of a smart craft serviceable as well as fast. Her masts were raked, which looks fast but does not contribute to speed, and her bowsprit had a graceful tilt. The *Resolute* is a speed machine; she looks like an equation reduced to its lowest terms. She is little good for anything but racing, but we can afford these expensive

toys. Her triangular Marconi rig is simpler and more efficient than the old type of sail spread from a gaff. Her beauty is of the new sort, the beauty of concentrated accuracy, the sureness of modern thought armed with precise method which has cut its way through the human lore of the past to the eternal impersonal heart of the law governing the movement of ships.

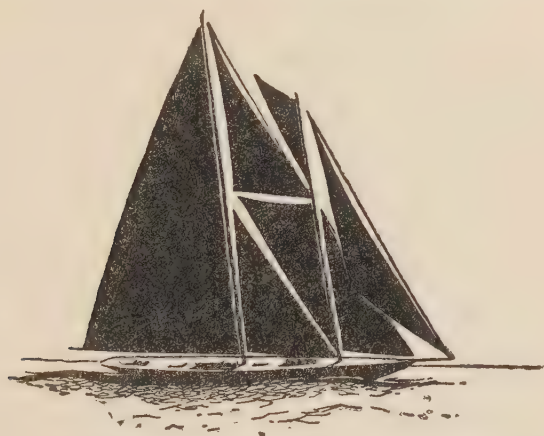


FIG. 35—THE RESOLUTE AS A SCHOONER

The relation of speed to modern existence is of tremendous importance to us in its application to our artistic setting. We seem to be going very fast. Our terrific new tempo of existence alarms and pains the conservatives and those who look back ruefully at the past. Relativity will help us solve this enigmatic equation. What is speed? A sense of speed is due to something standing still, while one passes it. Something must exist

for comparison or one cannot be aware of how fast one is traveling. An aeroplane going one hundred miles an hour, seen against a cloudless sky, hangs as a motionless speck. When it passes a cloud we realize its speed. It is because in part we move at a new and advanced rate of speed, and in part stand still, that we are so painfully aware of going, as we say, too fast. When everything shall at length have got under way and we move consistently, unifiedly in our new direction, this tension will cease.

To feel this is to sense the spirit of modern art, since art is but the servant of its day, and this day is at the mercy of inductive scientific reasoning. A book has recently appeared in France by Le Corbusier called "*L'Art décoratif d'Aujourd'hui*." In this book the author seeks to derive the new impulse to beauty from what he terms "*le bel outillage*," which suggests the beauty of mechanical usefulness. He finds in the beautiful form of a ship's propeller the inspiration to much of our appreciation of form. The propeller is merely a piece of bronze, whose specific function has rendered it heir to a pleasing form. So it is with nearly every part of the aeroplane, its beautifully balanced wings, and its fuselage. In it we recognize the same beauty which we see in the shape of a bird, which fits it to its task of flying. There is beauty too in the span of a steel bridge and in the perfect adjustment of the automobile, its parts and the whole, to its function of rolling rapidly over the roads, its hind wheels driven by a motor at the other



Photograph by Sigurd Fischer

FIG. 36—THE SHELTON HOTEL

Arthur Loomis Harmon, Architect



Photograph by Sigurd Fischer

FIG. 37—ELEVATOR LOBBY

By Buchmann and Kahn, Architects



Photograph by Sigurd Fischer

FIG. 38—BRONZE ELEVATOR DOOR

By Gaston Lachaise

end. The new shape and streamlines of motor boats, the body of a submarine with its resemblance to the serviceable fish, are equally beautiful. All of these objects are derived from our ability to do, with the aid of science, and new structural inventions, what man has never before been able to do. Mechanical industrial products have found beauty in seeking to arrive at their utmost usefulness. The material urge has preceded the consciously esthetic and produced new need-types upon which the future artist is bound to lean heavily when he casts about him for motifs for decorative design.

M. Le Corbusier arranges his book with as epitomized and poignant a simplicity as his architectural designs display. It is a revolutionary, iconoclastic sort of book and quite the most up to date to appear in Paris, scene of so many storms of esthetic logic.

The following passages translated from M. Le Corbusier's work give one some idea of the train of argument by which he supports his beliefs.

"The past is not an infallible entity. It had its beautiful things . . . and its ugly."

"Museums have come into being. In the past there were none. In the incoherence of a museum, no model exists. There exist only the elements of which one must judge."

"There are and there will continue to be consequences from the crisis which separates a pre-mechanical from a mechanical society."

"Culture has taken a step and hieratic decoration is over."

"We seem to be working to establish a simple and economical scale."

"Modern decorative art has no decoration."

"The modern phenomenon of the machine is bringing about a reforming of the spirit of the world. The human factor of the machine, having been conceived by man for his needs, remains."

"Machines cause to shine before our eyes, discs, spheres, cylinders of polished steel, cut with a precision of theory and an accuracy nature has never shown us. Our senses are aroused at the same time that we unconsciously revive race memories of the discs and spheres of the Gods of Egypt and of the Congo. Geometry and the Gods seated together!"

"Architecture is a spiritual system which fixes in a material world, the sentiment of an epoch."

"The Eiffel Tower," an aerial photograph of which is shown on the cover of the book, "took its place in architecture. In 1889 it represented the aggressive spirit of calculus. In 1900, esthetes wished to see it demolished. In 1925, it dominated the International Exposition of Decorative Arts. Above the plaster palaces writhing with decoration it towered, pure as a crystal."

It may be seen from this that M. Le Corbusier is a jump ahead of his contemporaries who exhibited at the exposition, at least a jump in another direction. He

evolves an esthetic system based upon a philosophy which accepts industrialism as the keynote of modern civilization.

In an attempt to analyze the new feeling for beauty, a French designer working in this country put it as follows: "It is the desire to expand, to soar, to get out, to escape from the intricacies of our too organized lives into a sense of space and the repose of lovely lines, airy, buoyant, graceful, exquisite in detail, and with plain, restful surfaces." In the desire to escape momentarily from the complex tangle of modern life, we take delight in the contemplation of simple, spacious ensembles, devoid of sentimental content.

How clearly this feeling is echoed in the drawing, Fig. 16, which shows two high buildings recently built in New York City. The little skyscraper in the distance is exactly an expression of that "rising to soar above the intricacies of life" below in the street. There is about it a serenity, a symbolizing of new spiritual needs, although in its actual construction, less idealism than material practicality took part. The building on the corner affords a perfect contrast to this. Capped off, prevented from soaring, by the dark shadow of a square antique cornice, it arouses no emotional response within one. So long as we remain beneath the lid, so to speak, of our outlived past, we will not experience these emotional arousings which are the stimuli of growth.

We are coming to love, to observe objects in clear daylight, unadorned even by shadow, to appreciate

their simple generic form with its trick of being like only itself with its own weight, surface and color. Precisely in this way we are having to contemplate the bald realities of existence—no longer shrouded in the mysteries of the Middle Ages, but free-standing, explored now, for us to appreciate apart from any setting or sentiment. The naked human body is more beautiful in its truth, even after the golden days of youth have gone, than when clothed. Sculptors have realized and studied this fact, Rodin and today Epstein, who by expressing the sheer ugliness of a subject attain beauty in achieving its spiritual truth. For the portrait of an ugly thing may be beautiful. We are appreciating the simple basic form of such objects as eggs, fruit, musical instruments or stones. We enjoy these objects of unified form remarkable for the ease with which they may be observed and all of their aspects enjoyed.

Figs. 17 and 18 received prizes in recent photographic contests and illustrate the point. Fig. 17 is less advanced than its companion and deals with the overpowering hugeness of this steel and concrete world we have evolved, the sense of minuteness we experience standing at the base of tremendous towers observing the splendor of the play of light and shade on swelling surfaces. It is a composition of tremendous power. There is a glamour here and the romance of modern industry. Fig. 18, however, is purely impersonal, a study in form and surface for its own sake. The photographer has as-

sembled a variety of circular and elliptical motifs each with a different color value and texture. The shapes

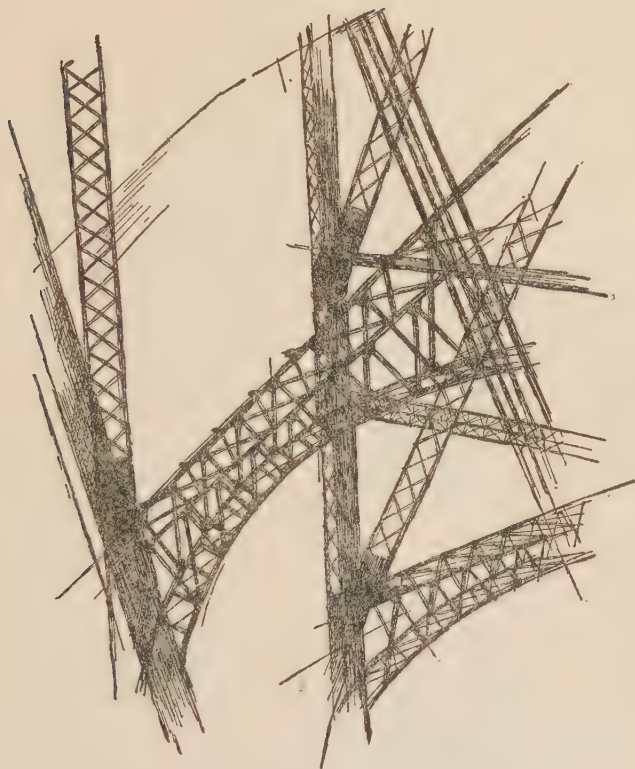


FIG. 39—STEEL GEOMETRIC PATTERNS

made by one object seen against another are interesting and rich. The hammered pattern of the tray radiates pleasingly from the coffee pot spout and makes it the center of interest. The incident of the spots of light in the shadow cast by the strainer upon the tray is delight-

ful. The strong curve of the plate is a perfect ellipse and nothing is more beautiful. It is an arrangement, a design of homely industrial objects which yet have beauty in their strong geometric shapes and natural surfaces. There is no touch of craft nor art in the group save the crude hammering of the tray and the cheap pattern on the plate. This is "bel outillage" and an instance of where the camera comes into play as a legitimate instrument of art, a mechanical instrument recording the aspect of a mechanical ensemble.

The drawing, Fig. 39, of the steel grillage of a great bridge gives perfectly mechanically a fascinating play of angle, curve and line. Its random geometry puts one in mind of an irregular Moorish tile pattern, while it more closely resembles Mr. Bragdon's fourth-dimensional ornament. Surely there is beauty in its strength and delicacy, the great uprights embroidered with the minute tracery of small Z-bars. On a clear night to gaze upward at the stars glimmering in the interstices of this mighty black lace is to sense, with a feeling almost of awe, an eternity of mathematics.

A photograph of a dish full of eggs constitutes as beautiful a thing as is to be found. Run your eye along the beautiful silhouette of the egg, the swelling of its surface, the exquisite line of shade beneath it and the complicated and beautiful shadows cast by it upon other eggs! It is a sculptural problem hardly bettered if we make it a basket of fruit, where color adds another

perfection no more satisfying than the endless accidental occurrence of egg shadows. We feel for simple planes and angles, clear and sharp. Here we are safe from illusion. There is no content of sentiment, nothing to obscure the true value of a beauty we are certain of.

The influence of African negro sculpture upon the forms of modern plastic art is possibly owing to an impulse common to the mind conceiving both. We are today consciously striving to reduce sculpture to a minimum of emotional content by stressing simplification and strength of design. It is the impulse to liberate ourselves from those emotional reactions which have too long obscured the true function of sculpture, which is to have form. The unsophisticated savage of medieval Africa was as innocent of sentiment as he was aware of plastic quality. He distinguished intuitively between reality and his wooden images. The condition of his being bound by a net-work of superstition and taboo found expression in the sheer horror which he was capable of concentrating in his sculptural masterpieces. He symbolized both life and the horror surrounding it. Figs. 20 and 21 show examples of African wood sculpture dating from the thirteenth century. They are of an awful beauty, which appeals to us chiefly through the ability shown to reduce and epitomize form. The head presents a series of bold and striking contours of almost spherical form, unsullied by irrelevant detail and strengthened by

the exquisitely strong striations of the hair. It is also, in all probability, a marvelous portrait. In the small statuette, the sheer force of design at the same time galvanized by an erect fierce life, gives as poignant an example of plastic sculpture as could well exist. Add to that the weird ferocity of the head and what have we in occidental art to bear comparison with it save perhaps the sculptured portals of the Romanesque cloister at Moissac in southern France? In our frenzy to return to the pure sources of art we have hailed the discovery of these mysterious objects with almost hysterical ardor. We may not recapture the primitive naïveté of these figures in our own creations, but we will do well to let the lesson of their sheer plasticity sink in.

Modern furniture seeks to resolve itself into the simplest form that shall still retain interest. This renders it at once economical and easily cared for. Simple contours or flat surfaces are enhanced by veneer or a harmonious color decoration. In small concentrated spots are found bits of decoration at once exquisitely refined and new in spirit. It will not seek to cover already beautiful form with flourishes of hand-carved detail as did the pieces of the familiar Louis XV. style. The soft, rich surfaces of upholstery relieve an insistence on geometric form.

In upholstery and textiles we find new patterns following the mode of modern painting, pleasing patterns derived from natural forms, but never literal or hinting

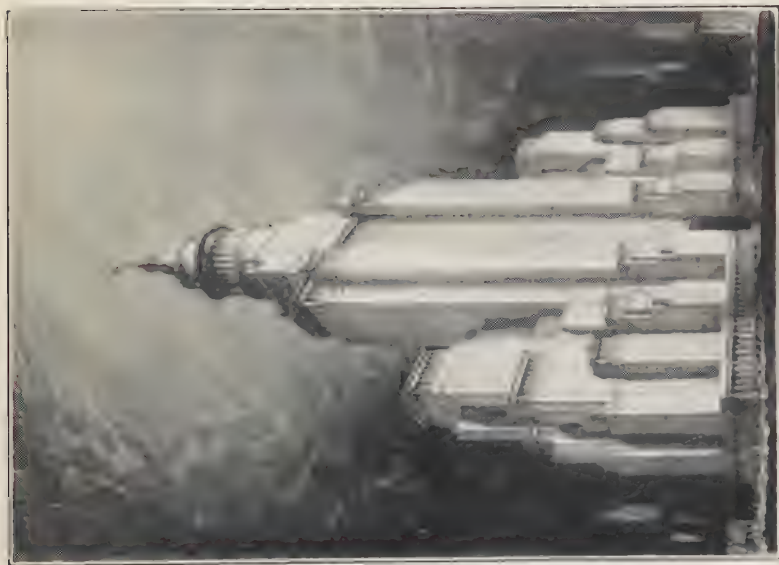


FIG. 4B—THE FINISHED BUILDING

The practical application of the Zoning Law.



FIG. 4A—THE ENVELOPE

Drawings by Hugh Ferriss after designs by Helmle and Corbett

Courtesy of Mr. H. W. Corbett



Photograph by Amemya

FIG. 42—THE AMERICAN RADIATOR BUILDING

Raymond Hood, Architect

of the past, basing their appeal on rhythm, juxtaposition of value and color, regardless of a possible subject.

Any attempt to discuss the spirit of modern art would be incomplete were one to omit the influence of the work of Paul Cézanne. The person incapable of comprehending the painting of Cézanne must remain unsympathetic to the inner significance of the modern movement. Cézanne felt the constraint imposed by academic form upon naturally free and beautiful objects, which sought only to have the truth told about them to reveal their whole beauty. And how to tell the truth with only color and line at one's command? Obviously a literal photographic approach could not do this. A too objective attention in this manner makes one aware rather of the intricacies of perspective than of the nature of the object shown in perspective. How often has one heard the remark, "What wonderful perspective!" But we are not here to enjoy a performance in perspective. We want to know the truth about the object we are gazing at, and the most important truth. We will eliminate the minor truths. Fig. 22 shows a pattern of apples and oranges by Cézanne now at the Louvre. In this painting we have drawing and design, not too much perspective. We see one object in front of another because of its wholesome interposition between us and the other object. The fruit dish full of oranges is made purposely higher at the back so that we may be made doubly aware of the fact that it is holding the oranges, rather than slighting this fact for the

sake of showing the dish in photographic perspective. The precise, but brutal boldness with which the apples are painted gives them a volume which fairly weighs upon the table. No elaborate folds are painted in either the background of flowered material or the white napkin, but the color quality and surface, which is the fundamental beauty, of each is preserved. It is, however, futile to discuss this painting without access to its color wherein lies its greatest lesson. Cézanne applied a clarifying bath of reason to art, just as we are today, from the standpoint of science, re-testing the values of life. We are knocking off the mud of centuries of speculation and clearing away the débris of decay.

The new spirit seems to image in its liberation from formulae something of the growing freedom of nature, to have substituted for rule of form a rule of freedom under control. There is about it an elusiveness which is the joy of the search for truth.

The modern eye seeks repose and refreshment as well as did those eyes of other days, and new decoration must indirectly fulfill this function. It must not only stimulate and startle but soothe and pacify by a certain spiritual quality derived from the honesty and simplicity of line and color. There must be no flabbiness.

The famous younger generation owes its appropriateness to the modern situation to the fact of its having been born entirely within the premise of today. Born within the sound of riveting, nurtured on electricity and gasoline and educated to the roar of cannon, while

the earth cut its own throat and demonstrated itself to be still a savage beast, these younger people have not known the tender environment, the unsophisticated protection of yesterday's children.

But these are the people who will produce and buy the art of the future, and one may be sure that it will not be an art dependent any longer on the past for its inspiration, not when once they have awakened to the joy of their unlimited position.

The artists, architects, craftsmen of the future have been, through the duration of their short-lived childhood, inured to disillusionment, and they have seen only the new things.

Is there not something a little tragic here? Has not something beautiful disappeared with the passing of the sweet pretenses of yesterday's adolescence? Above the clamor and commotion of their uncontrolled comings and goings, these young people have each their own precious life to live. If they are reckless, they are not doing things by halves, but blinded and wearied by a maze of rules and data, they as individuals are attempting to strike at the roots of things, clear dangerous strokes. If it be decadence, it is decadence seemingly without weariness. Vivid and transitory is its appearance, and in seeking to create its environment this note will take the place of so weak a substitute as those very "periods" which symbolize the restraining past.

CHAPTER VI

Education

MORE ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND AND EXPRESS OUR age in terms of art will come through a more progressive system of art education. Consistent expression of a civilization through art, such as we find in the thirteenth century, is made possible by the fact that artists could more readily comprehend the scope of their limitations. The limitations of the world of those days were limitations merely of knowledge, which fact implies no handicap to the medieval artist. For the realms of enlightenment and those of artistic creation have little to do with each other. This does not apply, however, to intelligence, which is indispensable to art. The power of the naked savages of ancient Africa as sculptors may be cited in support of this. The knowledge of an age may, however, influence art in this manner. An artist should grasp the scope of this knowledge, if not its detail, and be able to find some epitome of it in his work. If then, as in the thirteenth century, the range of the world's knowledge, more or less accurate, was by comparison to that of our day infinitesimal, it may be assumed that its gist was the more readily understood by the man alive then. Whereas today our inability to grasp even half of the plan of

things known to us leads momentarily to the creation of more and more specialists, a process of decentralizing knowledge. So that in order to keep it at all bound together such mechanisms as card catalogues and sub-committees have become necessary. The contrast between this condition of knowledge which has come with science and the unified knowledge of feudal days is easily perceptible.

Hence it is more difficult for our artist to envisage a composite image of his day than for the sculptor of Chartres, however erudite he may have been. Since our day is so extremely more complicated than any day ever seen, it would seem increasingly necessary that education in the field of art attempt to reveal something of the nature of our present civilization as well as insist upon the importance of the past. Only when we begin to understand a little of ourselves shall we be able to speak with coherence.

What, for example, is to prevent the introduction of philosophic debate and poetic symposia into the arid realm in which most of us have in the past studied to become something in art? Doubtless this will seem a typically pedagogical approach to what must depend upon spontaneity for its integrity, but it must be remembered that, to the wrath of scholars, the world fell upon and read Mr. Wells' "Outline of History" and since then has repeated the phenomenon in devouring Mr. Will Durant's "Story of Philosophy." It is a matter of preparing the pill for the patient. The patient is very

frequently a product of the twentieth century today whereas much of our administration of knowledge is of the era of dialectic. If it be a virtuous pill I argue the patient will benefit.

At least some spiritual as well as material explanation of our life should be offered the young mind fitting itself for the greatest of all tasks, to become the priest of beauty. It is of course argued by those who have succeeded best in teaching others to create that it is impossible. Artists cannot be taught to be artists. This is true. But they may be inspired and led, and philosophy and poetry are inspiring and teachers should be leaders as was Socrates.

For many reasons it is necessary today that we carefully train all young people in the study of art. This means knowledge for everybody, not merely the special training of those about to enter some creative field. Times have changed and made it imperative for every one to know what will protect him from such errors in judgment and taste as were impossible in the past. For just when we have begun to judge for ourselves it has become easier than ever to make bad judgments. The shift in our economic status has made each man the arbiter of his own artistic existence, yet one result of industrialism has been to guarantee an undependable artistic quality in what the machines produce.

If it be generally conceded that our system of education may be improved upon, in no branch of teaching is there more scope for effort than in the field of art.

Art seems to be taught with all the beauty left out. Why not reverse this process and teach the beauty with the art left out? Beauty is guarded by a barrier which the intellect alone may not penetrate, but proper exercise of the intelligence will bring one to a position before the barrier where with imagination we may enter. We are taught art much as children were formerly taught to spell, the way one trains animals, making the whole thing a feat of memory. This course of procedure is even carried out where students are specially training themselves to become architects and decorators. For the ordinary individual a knowledge of the history of art is a beneficial cultural corollary to the field of political and economic history. But let it remain so, as an embellishment of the mind and not a thing at all related to the process by which the artists who have created art in the past have accomplished their task. Again it becomes a task of weeding out the living matter from the dead. Training in the history of art is by no means training to become an artist, yet it would be impossible to over-estimate the importance of an artist's knowing his history. For its cultural associations will enrich his mind and spirit, but, unless he guard against it, will weaken his creative will. Here lies the deep-rooted difference between the impulse to record and the impulse to create.

For the archeologist to turn architect is indeed difficult. The record of the past in the matter of the achievements of such as have done so is illuminating.

Take for example the churches of Pugin and Scott which are dry and uninspired if correct, and in France the work of the great Viollet-le-Duc. The latter was responsible for restoring the life out of both Carcassonne and Pierrefonds so that today one may respond to them only upon a moonlight night or a foggy day. But his excellent and invaluable museum of casts at the Trocadéro has a truly useful function as a sort of plastic archive. His only positive contribution to beauty consisted in the cast iron spires he placed upon Notre Dame at Paris, Rouen and other churches. A too confining attention to the ideas of others dries up the source whence rises one's own creative faculty.

We of this country go to school all our lives and what we do with the information stowed away somewhere remains a mystery. It would seem that some young heads must fairly burst with potentiality, yet there appears relatively little outcome to correspond with the enormous consumption. It is time to turn to doing.

It is time to begin giving out.

Winold Reiss, the artist decorator, who has as well a school of painting, says his pupils come to him not knowing anything of how to work. Their heads are full of information with no creative motivation. It is this, how to create, that we must teach, and just how is it to be taught?

Again in the study of art we are taught to observe too closely the outward form and color of things, not their soul or that mysterious reply of our own soul to



FIG. 43—WOOD TABLE WITH METAL FINISH

Courtesy of Jones and Erwin

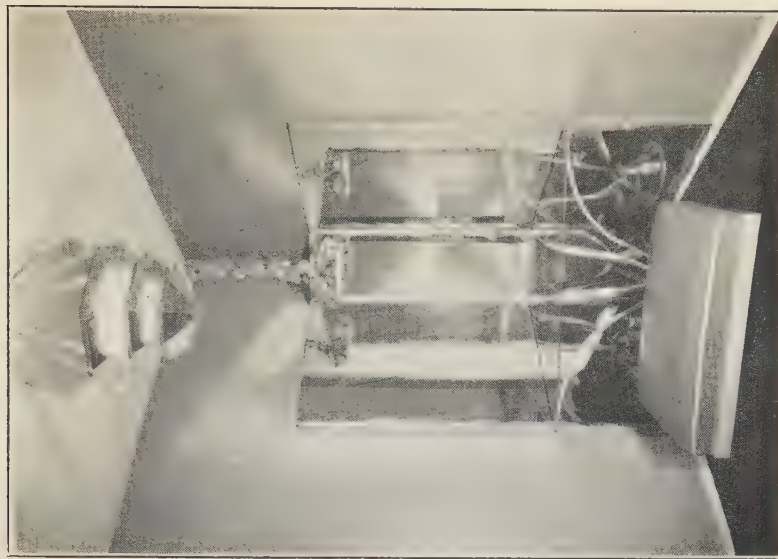


FIG. 44—CORNER DRESSING-TABLE, STOOL, AND
CHANDELIER



FIG. 45—MIRROR AND TABLE

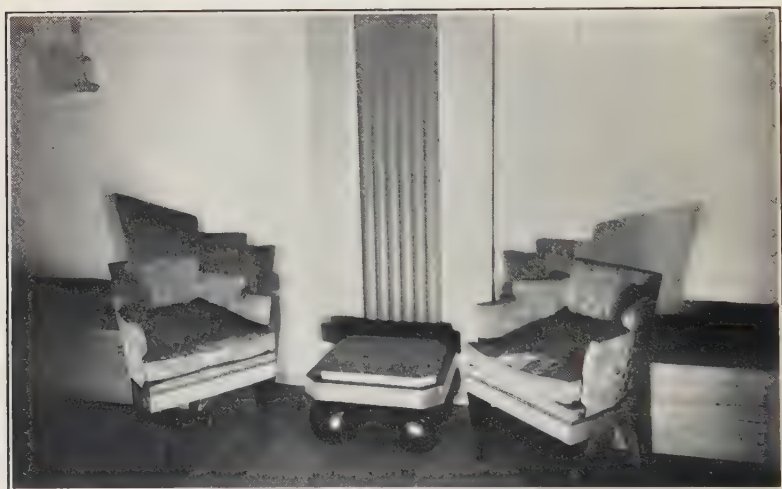


FIG. 46—STOOL AND CHAIRS

By Jones and Erwin

the meaning of life found in them. Obviously this is in contrast to the way we are being taught to study other subjects. For in science we are not contenting ourselves with the outward aspect of matter, but seeking through intelligence to penetrate its inner meaning. Art is a matter of penetrating those veiled depths where reason may not explore, but where intuition alone may bring to the surface the rich yield of beauty. Creation in art may be coldly criticized and estimated but not coldly taught. Children in school are forced to trace the exact lineaments of fruit, leaves, pussy willows and animals to a point where they come by a deadly hatred for the dread implements—paper and pencil. This is perhaps as near to committing a crime as we have come in our confused efforts to do something about everything. For the creation in the mind of a child of an antipathy for perhaps the one thing which may bring him the only real pleasure he will ever know is a dastardly deed. The substituting of a fear complex for that rare living thing, an uncomplicated sense of beauty which the child mind possesses, is like plowing in roses to sow ashes.

In Vienna during the tragic years of the war a man named Cizek strove with the thin sad-faced children of those livid days to help them utter a child's feelings for life. He did this, using drawing and color as his means. The children in his classes ranged from five to thirteen and fourteen years of age and each child during the time he remained in the class was a creative artist,

not a memorizing mechanism. In their working these children never had reference to any one else's drawings or paintings, save perhaps those in the class about them. Dr. Cizek would at the beginning of the class announce the subject of the drawings to be made that day, as, for example, Autumn, and from that pass to asking the children individually what they felt or saw in their minds when the word Autumn was spoken. Having stimulated the imagination and aroused a sense of the potential beauty of Autumn, he next helped them articulate on paper their own impression, criticizing the compositions and sometimes the technicalities of drawing, but never interfering with what the child was seeking to express. The results were more or less good as to their quality as paintings but the astounding thing revealed was the wonderfully simple ability to comprehend the inner beauty of things which all children possess. It is this thing which we seem never to arouse in our children and which we allow to become so covered up by inhibitions and false conceptions that nothing is ever enjoyed through it.

Since the showing of the work of Dr. Cizek's pupils in this country and the publication of numerous articles concerning it, a number of schools for children, based upon methods similar to his, have appeared. The April to July, 1926, number of the quarterly *Progressive Education* gave an account of these efforts and many illustrations. This is a salutary sign of the times and reminds one with a pang of the time when one went

to school one's self and during the hour or so, specifically dedicated to art each week, drew pussy willows on gray paper with white paper pasted across the bottom for snow. I do not remember that this process aroused my imagination or served to do more than fill in an hour less terrible than most. We were never told why this was required of us as far as I can remember, and it only reminds me in its amusing irrelevance of a photograph in Le Corbusier's book which shows two baboons playing violins.

The work reproduced in the above publication shows really remarkable interpretations of concrete and abstract themes done by children seven years of age. They are set to creating before they suspicion the existence of rules governing creation, and before long they themselves discover these rules. This is vitally significant. One fit to be an artist will discover the rules of art by himself. Nearly any human entity is potentially artistic if the flame borne within him is not let expire during the first few and tenderest years of life.

I personally have experimented with a child, using this method, in so far as I understood it, and was repaid with what I choose to believe were extraordinary results. There seemed to be no limit to what a picture might mean and no technical task too difficult for our joint accomplishment. If I furnished some of the fine points of an elephant's anatomy, his pose, his expression and his beautiful "being there" invariably came from the child.

It would be iconoclastic and perhaps ridiculous for

one to prophesy a revolution in our educational methods along the lines of Dr. Cizek, but may I suggest that he bears a deep and serious message for us.

For the great point seems to be that we must insist rather upon an inductive methodic system than upon a categorical one. The inductive principle of deriving results from the facts of the case pertains to art as surely as it does to science. Art and science are not different save that at present science possesses a greater share of beauty than art, because it is quite alive. Such teaching is a subtler matter than just the telling, for, as has been pointed out, beauty is not in the end a purely rational concept. Knowledge has suffered from remaining a matter of transmittable categories. It is now being clarified and expanded by the method for arriving at a correct conclusion instituted by Bacon. Cézanne searched art in this same way, with analyzing intelligence, from which process he seemed to drink in inspiration rather than deaden his creative faculty. He looked for truths so simple that we had learned to be blind to them.

At least we will not progress so long as we merely continue to drill our students in past lore with practice in paraphrasing what they remember of this or that, on the side. If from the beginning, method—which is creative—were made more important than category—which is memory—we should have only to evolve method.

It is possible to conceive of a school where no models



Courtesy of Professor Charles Richards

FIG. 47—SECTION OF FRENCH EXHIBITION AT METROPOLITAN MUSEUM



Courtesy of John Wanamaker

FIG. 48—MODERNIST INTERIOR



FIG. 49—POIRET SCREEN



Courtesy of Lord and Taylor

FIG. 50—ITALIAN BOWL AND VASES

Photographs by G. W. Harting

should be used. The walls of the average school, be it in architecture or decoration, are lined with embalmed ideas, or the mediocre performances of previous students, which are at once discouraging and uninspiring. The place for such displays is a museum and not a hive of creation. What the young mind bent upon creation requires above all is a void, a beautiful void, the incubator of ideas. A student defeated by exposure to a void should gratefully accept the fact that it has been revealed to him that he is not to become an artist. He may then at once withdraw and follow the path of the copyist.

One's normal observation of past art in the course of a day's existence is sufficient to instruct the mind in the matter of what has been, particularly in conjunction with an intelligent course of historical lectures given from the analytical side. For the student of architecture to simply wander among the side streets of upper New York might in itself preclude the necessity of ever studying photographs. For granted that the examples of architecture encountered would be inferior to their antecedents in Italy or France, still a photograph with its inhuman flatness destroys so much of the plastic quality of however perfect a subject that its result may be less beneficial to observe than a good copy.

We have got to learn to forget what we know if ever we are going to enjoy ourselves. For modern man is profoundly weary with bearing the burden of his com-

plicated knowledge. It has more than ever taken from him what might have remained to him from the simplicity of his childhood. If he only goes on adding more knowledge but less relieving comprehension to his store he will eventually utterly decivilize himself.

Coming to the question of education and training in architecture and the applied arts today, one finds in general the following procedure to be universal. Before quickening the creative impulse in a student his brain is first well loaded with a burden of forms and facts to be remembered. This of course makes the whole thing appear as formidable as did mathematics and physics to the freshman, although each was a potential delight. The anticipation of the delight to create is deadened because those in power agree a student must first have a vocabulary of actual forms before he can make himself coherent. As a matter of fact, he can never use even these pieces of form correctly until he has come by a knowledge of what he should have learned to begin with, the underlying plastic basis of design. The matter of light and shade, of proportion, rhythm, color, scale, can all be taught without the knowledge of a single classical element. The classical element however can never be taught as anything other than a set piece until its relation to the fluid plastic entirety of design has been learned. We begin our study today with learning the classical orders, a portentous task, and in connection with this, we study the whole field of history of both decorative art and architecture with a view to

branding on our minds the aspects of the various periods or styles. As a result styles are remembered by us as precisely what they are not, something cold and formal. In their day they were in a living flux; today, as derelicts from their context, they are necessarily cold and formal.

And here is where the rule of Vignola comes into play. Giacomo da Vignola was an archeologically inclined Italian architect of the high or formal period of the Renaissance. This was a time when the savor of the early Renaissance had evaporated, and pomposity with great classical sophistication had taken its place. Vignola re-edited the treatise on architecture by Vitruvius, a rather dull and methodical soul of ancient Roman days, a task already once done by Alberti of Florence, in the early days. This treatise indicated exact rules for playing the game of the orders. The kind of architecture it fostered is chiefly known as Palladian, for Palladio was perhaps the arch-exponent of the high style based upon the orders. The architecture of both Vignola and Palladio is refined and beautiful, almost great. Since that day, Vignola has remained the high priest of classical architecture and the English Georgian style is known as Palladian, while we in America are familiar with the charming Palladian window of Colonial days.

The above paragraph gives a brief history of the document which is still law in our schools and to which the young student makes his first bow. It is a fascinating

old document, but is it not a little as if students in astronomy should be required to first master the science of Copernicus?

After learning the orders as they are called, we are encouraged to go to work making combinations of their various parts. Only the comprehensive eye of the very sage critic may rescue a student from early disaster at this juncture, for it may too soon become merely a fascinating game played with lines on paper, a pretty game, a fitting together of pieces like the jigsaw puzzle.

Hence, our noses are kept to the grindstone of antiquity, whether we glance at the mind of the average artist at work or of the average citizen about to purchase this work. The one is about to produce something without life, the other eagerly searching for something which will bear out his illusion that only in the tomb-like quiet of the past may solace from the present be sought. Both artist and public escape the true joy of the living essence of beauty which dwells only in the realm of feeling, not of knowledge.

Another obstacle in the way of true progress in design is the use of paper. Paper is cheap today. Once it was not. Yet the drawings we find made by architects in the days when architecture was great, are very few, and very simple. They are of the nature of figured diagrams or schemes. There was no misconstruction placed upon their proper function, no confusion of a two-

dimensional representation of three-dimensional volume with actual volume.

We lean too heavily upon paper, and consequently the drawing of lines. Some of its thinness has crept into our work and it is always a snare. Its use is responsible for the majority of errors in scale, observable in recent architecture, and for the lack of a sense of plastic mass. It is the true servant of literature, rather than of the greatest of all plastic arts. Models are the thing for teaching architecture. And yet in most schools, the class in modeling is relegated to a very minimum allotment of time. What might not a class in "plastic art" bring about?

It is only a matter of disentangling real issues from the mass of categorical confusion built up during centuries. Cézanne sat down and thought about painting.

In Europe, there already exist schools for the teaching of design where modernism is the accepted rule. In Holland, the school at Delft claims eighty per cent of its faculty as modernist. The new order is very well established in Holland. Prof. J. A. Wattjes of the Delft School writes: "The architecture of a certain period depends on the manner of construction we have to deal with during that period." "In designing a building, we do not strive merely for beauty, but to comply with certain conditions and necessities." "An art is a real art when we are original and produce something different from the previous styles; hence, in designing a modern

building, no features or forms of a previous style may be used." This is certainly liberal. "Designing a building in an historical style, even if new features are used and old ones re-formed, is not art."

The modern style in Holland was instituted by the architect H. P. Berlage, some twenty-five years ago, and such men as M. de Klerk, Cuypers and de Bazel have followed. Great municipal buildings are boldly carried out in the most radical designs.

So long as we observe merely the outward dress of our present civilization, contrasting it mournfully with days gone by, seeing only tall steel buildings, railroad trains and flying machines, without at all entering into the spirit behind these truly wonderful creations, we will continue to stagnate and fail to reproduce in our artistic environment the spirit of our day.

We are moved by the beauty we look upon not because it has a certain name or recognizable form, but because the proportion, curve, or colors of the object act pleasurably upon our senses. If we cannot be taught to feel this we might as well give up. Until we learn to see the tall building not as an *idée fixe*, but as a beautiful tower upon whose planes and angles light performs pleasant feats, we cannot begin to yearn for a reflection of this kind of beauty in our surroundings.

Our designers should be taught first to deal with light, shadow, mass and proportion as they apply to the new needs of architecture and the decorative arts.

A German sculptor, Max Kruse, has recently pub-

lished a small book containing many revolutionary ideas in the matter of art education. He distinguishes between sculpture and plastic art. He says: "Every one is seeking new forms that are not merely skillfully made-over tradition but which will give the personal feeling of modern man full opportunity for expression." "Sculpture is something in plastic form imbued by man with sentiment, while plastic art is simply a matter of form and material devoid of theme, depending only upon the beauty of its surfaces for its appeal." We see a good deal of modern sculpture which may, according to this, be defined as plastic art. Brancusi produces strange graceful shapes without apparent meaning, which are intended to delight us only in a plastic sense. As such they are beautiful shapes, but in our sophistication we have forgotten, as the African savage had not, that there may be a form of abstract beauty containing no such theme for emotional enjoyment as is true of Leda and her swan.

We must recognize the fact that our sophistication has overlaid our simpler sense reactions and keeps us from going to the bottom in our search for modern beauty which is nearly as impersonal in its adherence to pure necessary form as Brancusi's sculpture. Science is impersonal, a respecter of truth, not persons, and it has produced the cold mass of the skyscraper, the graceful ruthlessness of the aeroplane, the controlled efficiency of the automobile. We will discover the souls of these objects in their very impersonal perfection.

No mention has been made of the camera, yet its influence upon the development of art and particularly upon the lay mind must be reckoned with when it comes to straightening out the tangle.

Beautiful pictures may be made with a camera, beautiful, that is, in the old sense of having theme, atmosphere and composition. But this is the result of a long process of manipulation during printing, when the human interpretive touch of the artist slips in and the mechanical click of the camera recedes into the background. It becomes like almost any other graphic art with the labor of drawing obviated.

But the average photograph, of which thousands dance before the eye daily, does not do this. It is just a click and a mechanical registration of certain literal incidents. The process has no spiritual element whatever, no soul. Yet the average man has come to identify photography with art. He has become perverted to the extent of accepting a grossly inferior substitute for the pure thing. For there is more art in the naïve scrawl of an infant than in the average photograph. Art has to do with the human entity.

The nearest a camera may come to artistic achievement is when the category of its endeavor is restricted. As a bold recorder of utterly impersonal shapes and patterns, it is more nearly within its scope than when fired off at a spring sunset. There is no rule, but a consistent principle will be in operation, the principle of

fitness, if we distinguish the nature of one substance from that of another, and combine them in groups of similars.

Other perverting results of the misapplication, owing to initial enthusiasm, of the invention of photography, have been hinted at in Chapter Two. The camera made eclecticism possible.

CHAPTER VII

Discovering the New Beauty

PART OF OUR TASK TODAY IS TO LEARN TO LOOK FOR the agreeable side of what we scorn, because unused to it. It will pay us to feel for the beauty of steel, to dissociate the thing itself from the unpleasant effects of its abuse.

For whosoever may have been convinced by the foregoing chapters that there exist both the inevitable necessity for revolutionary changes in our arts and unlimited resources from which to derive the new aspects of these changes, some effort to specify the nature of such sources of beauty must be made.

It is to the eyes of those hardy spirits who are willing to face the situation that the first joys in our new art will come. Some are made ill by this new world and seek to escape the rigors of speed and confusion in voluntary exile to Europe and other charming and exotic quarters of the earth, where they are no longer forced to face our perplexing problems. With more or less happiness they continue to lead the unreal lives of expatriates. They do not migrate in that spirit of ideal revolt which animated the Pilgrims, but desert the field with a gesture of negative protest. To those who see clearly, this is hardly a satisfactory solution of the prob-

lem of finding happiness today. Most of us have to make the best of the situation, and, with the serious will to study what is wrong in our way of living, why it brings so little satisfaction, help to remedy it.

Much of the problem of discerning beauty in the art of our new age lies in learning to recognize old friends in new raiment. There are but a half dozen laws at most which govern design and if we look, we will discover all of these to have been obeyed in whatever object may possess beauty. But learning to recognize the underlying fundamentals in design is not an easy task. Artists sense them intuitively.

At least we may be certain that in looking at a piece of modern work it is for form, color and design we much search, and not for sentiment. We must look for that same fresh quality which pleases us in the Cro-Magnon bison. Sentiment is there, but unconsciously. It is growing a new, healthier growth.

Artists in the past have derived many of their decorative motifs from plant and sea forms or from the results of performing the actual technical task of constructing an object. As an example of the latter method of deriving architectural decoration, let us take the elements of the Greek Doric entablature with its dentils, metopes and triglyphs, all bearing some functional relation to the evolution of the order from its wooden prototype. In pottery much decoration is made, such as striping a jug as it turns on the wheel, by means incidental to the actual process of making, or in weaving

by patterns which are the outcome of interlacing different colored strands repeated mechanically. Fig. 1. We must look for this same thing to happen today, and with the tremendously increased technical facilities at our command what myriad new effects may we not arrive at.

In architecture we are swiftly changing from a type of exterior design based on the use of cut stone and brick to one in which terra cotta or concrete forms the wall. Stone makes a thick self-supporting wall in which light is admitted by holes the tops of which must be either lintels or arches. In a stone wall we like to see the strength and thickness of the stone, so we set the windows back at the face of the inner jamb, thus giving a deep shadow and showing the nature of the wall. Decoration on such a wall must be vigorous and plastic to the degree of the vigor reached in the structure itself. A massive wall should not have delicate ornament unless by contrast to increase the feeling of its greatness.

Now, with the image of masonry walls still living in our minds we are building walls which are merely curtains hung on a great frame. The very essence of that surface is flatness. Any effort to treat such a wall with the vigorous chiaroscuro of thick stone is a false note. Every subterfuge was employed to obtain thick window jambs in early skyscrapers and only recently has the beauty inherent in a true confession of flatness come to light. The whole nature of exterior design is yielding

to this influence, where steel is in use, and only the old guard cling to masonry windows. The seeking to express a beautiful sort of thin flatness, of great area, is a merely technical process reflected in decorative treatment, much like the fun of striping a jug as it whirls on the wheel.

The nature of concrete is again a factor. It is necessary for us to use concrete where stone has been used. It is like stone, but unlike stone it is poured into molds. It may be given a very fine outer face if the process is



FIG. 51—"LA VITESSE"

By Saint Didier

more carefully carried out than is habitual in America. It may be easily molded into some form of external treatment which shall still tell the truth, if the result be attained in a sufficiently direct way. Long flat strips may be placed vertically or horizontally in the forms to give thin channels or receding facets. Gelatine molds may be used, placed in the forms to leave a flat relief sculptural panel when the latter are removed. Here again is a tendency to flatness in accord with that already mentioned as resulting from thin curtain walls.

These two factors alone are so far-reaching and revolutionary in effect that they are responsible for a great part of the new feeling in decorative art, even down to the very small objects which feel their influence just as so much of Gothic decoration derived its form from the pointed cusped arch which was purely a structural form.

Of course the stamp of the machine will be found on all our industrial, that is, not handmade, commodities. And it is typical of the machine that patterns made up of straight lines are more easily accomplished than curved ones, which illustrates the direct effect of process on a new commodity.

In attempting to indicate the sources of those forms which find echo in the appearance of modern applied art, I should select first the trinity: steam, steel and machinery. Of these, steel and machines are most productive of themes although their application to our immediate environment seems still a bit forced. They rather suggest a feeling, a spirit, than any directly applicable motifs. Yet their influence on design will be found to be more than a vague emanation. Its existence is due to actual technical practice.

Bolshevist decorative art, Fig. 48, makes great use of color decorations based on the shape and appearance of machinery itself. While interesting from point of view of pattern and color, these designs appear to our eyes at least too literal and too soullessly machine-like to contain either beauty of aspect or sentiment. It is a

crude performance, what we want being a more abstract adaptation. Wall papers and stamped fabrics are being designed and printed in patterns suggested by the interlacing angles of steel construction such as one sees when gazing aloft through the members of a great bridge.

Figure 27, taken through the kindness of Miss De Pinna, shows a bit of the wall paper and one of the lighting fixtures in her New York apartment. The paper design is very probably suggested by a maze of intersecting wires. It is a pattern of straight lines of slightly different width which as they intersect suggest depth and have a richness derived from one sharp edge and one diffused as the white zones between the lines increase. It is geometric, free, strong and delicate and essentially of the machine, for no method of hand-blocked days would have had sufficient trueness to rule so many perfectly straight and perfectly parallel lines. Here is a perfectly mechanical decoration, mechanical repetition of a mechanical pattern, made by a machine, and few will dispute that the result is beautiful.

The light fixture is a wire basket, melon-shaped, covered with colored silk, very lovely when illuminated. Electricity has given us above all a new light for the world, second only to the sun itself. The beauties of this light are only beginning to be appreciated as we learn to apply it in a straightforward logical fashion. In talking recently with an American painter just come from having spent several years abroad, he stated that

his predominant impression of this country seemed to come from our use of light. At least we may say that electricity has utterly changed the aspect of city night. It is the extreme brilliance of electric light when we see it thrown from a concealed source to bathe some tower in a glow of light, picking it out of the night in all its beauty, that glorifies the modern city. Patterns suggested by intersecting rays of light, the beams of searchlights traversing the night and hitting some brilliant spot, suggest a hundred different motifs. In fact the use of light itself must soon be given a place as a minor art, and as we discover more applications for it we will have realized a new and striking source of beauty appalling to any one not born in the twentieth century. Fig. 28 is a picture of the illuminated tower of the Polish pavilion at the Paris Exposition. Its geometric form baffles description, but close inspection reveals how it is built up of prismatic solid forms based on a six-pointed star plan, and quartered into large, and within them, small diamond panes. It is strongly suggestive of the wall paper just referred to with another dimension added. It is no more than an enormous geometric lantern, yet it looks like an electric lantern. In some way electric light has never looked well when used as flame lights were used, as candles or lamps. But here is a form as coldly clear, as brilliant and impersonal as electricity itself, and the effect of it is, I think, beautiful.



Courtesy of Lord and Taylor

FIG. 52-ITALIAN VASE

Photograph by G. W. Harting



Courtesy of Lord and Taylor

FIG. 53—ENSEMBLE BY LORD AND TAYLOR

Photograph by Seymour Hill

The designs of Mr. Bragdon for lanterns, made after his four-dimensional patterns, are things of great beauty and similar in effect to the above example.

Other possibilities of light are the extraordinary things that may be done by projecting color, now that we have the brilliance of electricity. The lighting of theater curtains as an accompaniment to music may grow into an art. At least the simple projection of colored light upon colored material of lovely surface may reach a point where we shall enjoy looking at that without any accompaniment—a symphony of silent color, fading, changing, ever finding new shapes and new infusions of key and color harmony. Already in modern color, the influence of colored light is seen, for light is not like pigment. Light color is pure color, and its primary, secondary and tertiary division different from what artists have learned from dealing with pigment. In light, red and blue do not make purple. Poster art leans heavily upon color schemes suggested by light. Bands of color, parallel and fading from light to dark as they grade from pale yellow to deep green surrounded by a warm black to enhance the brilliance, illustrate this. The black comes from darkness necessary to projection of light.

A projected beam of light hitting a plane gives a perfect circle, an ellipse or a parabola. These are the most beautiful of imaginable curves. Imagine projections of different colored beams at different angles on a

given spot in a plane. What a beautiful world of curves and rainbow lines opens before one. And how simply and mechanically we obtain a miracle of beauty.

Of the most impelling beauty is a dynamo room where in terrific silence tremendous, shining, encased engines perform an unseen task. Here is beauty which may not be directly borrowed, but which seems above all things modern, animate with a mysterious spiritual significance.

Of the things science has bequeathed us and from which we may extract material for the creation of beauty, there is aside from its use in light our new acquaintance with physical color. We have come to wield color as the rainbow does, not any longer in the somber harmonies of the early Italians and Dutch, so suggestive of that day. The rainbow is the source of color and we have captured it. We have gone to the germ root, the philosophic beauty of the why and wherefore of color. We may even come to use color, pure and brilliant and without form. This is modern in feeling for the beauty of the essential thing itself, without content, as *vers libre* sought to make use of the sound of language to express beauty, without necessarily having the language mean anything. Of course it did often mean nonsense, which was disconcerting, and it has been necessary to go the step further and use the sounds of language, but not formed into words, to gain the effect pure.

To most people this has appeared as the final breaking down of everything, the sad end of all art, woe and

calamity. Great men washed their hands of it. George Moore decided art was done.

It is not done. The inquirer spirit has merely entered into artists for the time being. They are also experimenting and they know it. They are testing out the truth of what they inherited as are the scientists the matter in other fields. There is a love abroad for synthesis, for getting at the fundamental essential natures of the component parts of our composite world. In music Debussy played with the beautiful sounds of notes, not seeking to weave them into any theme which should make of music a double affair, sound and theme. His method was in the last analysis one of logic, as was his scale, and of philosophy. He knew there must be beauty in each of the components pure of ordinary music, and he took the indispensable one and performed beautiful experiments with it, like Pasteur. He did not break down, because unable to sustain it, the old method of music with theme and motif. That in fact is not what is the matter with modernism. One hears the accusation frequently made that it funks attempting to equal the old triumphs of form because it cannot sustain the effort, hence breaking down into phrases instead of sentences. Debussy carefully chose his ground. And with grand opera flourishing, was it not perhaps time that some one did a little thinking? When Italian singers appeared before questionable and anachronistic scenery to bare their violent emotions in German song was it not time? What was that sort of opera, drama,

music or architecture? It was sentiment but it was hardly art. The phrase is of the tempo of our day. Literature and art today seem composed of phrases each recording its impact. Just so the family has disintegrated into a number of incomplete individuals.

Again we have the wealth of organic form revealed by the microscope from which to derive form and color as did the Latin artists from their bowls of pomegranates, plums and apricots.

Toward the end of the 18th century Rousseau led men back to nature before they knew much about nature. The beauty that came from that movement was a trend toward naturalistic decoration and a pretty, artificial life out of doors. Marie Antoinette had her Petit Trianon and played milkmaid and Chateaubriand wrote "Atala"; nevertheless silks and laces were not laid aside and sports were unknown, save hunting and riding wherein every one had plenty of exercise. It was a lovely spectacle but it was based on enjoyment and philosophy.

Today we do not play milkmaid in the fresh air, we fly through it.

And the beauty which results from this is of a far less artificial sort.

Flying is not so much the conquest of the air as man's eventual adapting of himself to the demands of atmosphere if he wishes to use it as a roadway. Chiefly in form, the aeroplane and dirigible suggest shapes which



Courtesy of Bonwit Teller and Company

FIG. 54-ADVERTISEMENT

By Rigal



Courtesy of Ferrobrandt, Inc.

FIG. 55—BEDROOM IN APARTMENT DESIGNED BY FERROBRANDT, INC.

Photograph by Brown Brothers

may prove adaptable to furniture and plastic ornamentation.

On the ground we have in the automobile one of the most perfectly beautiful and fit objects ever evolved. Its swift and silent comfort might suggest the whole mood for the decoration of a room and fall in readily with the way in which that room is coming to be built.

The same is true of the strangely curved craft with which we have mechanically adjusted ourselves to swift flight over the waves and beneath them.

From these three types of craft we derive much of the romantic element in modern life. They are more emotionally stirring than stationary machines, more exciting. Yet their direct application as motif sources to decoration or furniture could not be along logical lines, for they have no direct structural connection with the needs of furniture or house design. They may contribute kinds of window construction, compact planning of certain accessories and some new materials, but their chief message is their own beauty, the beauty of form coming from function, the beauty of precise calculation.

Modern painting contains for us a thousand clues. Here we enter a field in which the work has been done for us, the essence of the modern aspect of life extracted and ready for us to apply to the blocking of textiles and wall papers, and the laying out of painted decorations where a flat treatment must be retained. Cubism, because of its quality of flatness, its design of angles

and planes, is readily adaptable to modern methods of employ. Its application to machine use is far easier than is the case with intricate and altogether curvilinear designs. No form of decoration could have been devised which would have fallen more readily into its place in the great modern industrial scheme. There is a tremendous field for the evolution of some system of decora-



FIG. 56—DIAMOND PENDANT

By Dusanoy



FIG. 57—BROOCH

By Raymond Templier

tion based on cubism and mechanically accomplished by successively superimposing areas of transparent color.

Figs. 56 and 57 show two jewels derived from cubistic forms, of which the pendant of coral, onyx and jasper in different tones, with a diamond in the center, is in particular interesting. It illustrates a principle of asymmetric dynamic balance, also the fact that new styles of design usually creep in from the realm of smaller objects.

The stained glass panel called "Luxury," Fig. 26, by Maumjean Brothers, is contrived almost entirely of triangular and rectangular pieces, the figure above retaining curvature. It illustrates a condition of transition, where the traditional form of the whole is kept and the incident carried out differently. From a distance the



FIG. 58-SOFA
By Sué and Mare

window, which is very beautiful in color, resembles while it differs from, most stained glass of the past.

The sofa, Fig. 58, with the lovely needlework back, by Sué and Mare, is fairly conservative in point of design, but the treatment of the upholstery indicates the influence of cubism. The design is almost too vigorous for decoration, but in the simplification of the decorative forms into planes of silhouetted and graded color, we see the work of cubism. Non-essential incident has

gone that its place may be taken by volume and color. In this example the effect was very charming, delicate and lovely in color, and not too startling to be appreciated by even the conservatively minded. For the study of form for decoration, we may turn to the syntheses of nature evolved by Brancusi, Epstein and others who follow the purely plastic methods. Again and again we



FIG. 59—CHEST OF DRAWERS

Exhibited by Sué and Mare

will find such form to coincide in spirit with the form assumed naturally by objects in modern use.

Figs. 24-26, 56-60 show a number of modern creations of French origin all displaying new tendencies. The two hand-tufted rugs from Galeries Lafayette show the influences of painting and banded light color. Fig. 59, the flat and beautifully veneered chest of drawers by Sué and Mare, has ivory drawer pulls and supports which recall Egyptian lotus bud columns. The boudoir composed by Dufrêne and Tcherniack is

an ensemble based upon flat surfaces terminating in a wavy edge, a theme capable of endless manipulation. It gives an impression at once gracious and free as one's senses become influenced by the constant rippling of lines. It is somewhat rhythmic and soothing, like watching the play of the surface of water.



FIG. 60-CHAIR

By Sûé and Marc

Paradoxical in its significance is the modern flair for primitive art, the sculpture of the African negro, the simple brilliance of the color of the Mexican Indian. It is the simplicity of these objects which brings comfort to our over-intellectualized consciousness. They represent a state we unconsciously yearn for in our fatigue from too much undigested learning. It is a relief to let thinking go while we taste the delights of sense

alone. Here, I think, lies the explanation of our fondness for the savage rhythm of jazz. Noisy though it be, it is really restful to our jaded sensibilities. It is easy of enjoyment and we do not criticize. It is akin to passing one's hand over the curves of a great sea shell or watching the falling of water.

One must plunge without fear deeply and sympathetically to the roots of our modern era, by understanding the worst of it as well as the best, if we would enjoy it.

CHAPTER VIII

Steel, Concrete and Terra Cotta

IF THE QUESTION BE ASKED, "WHAT IS ARCHITECTURE in this country today?" one can only answer it is not what it once was. It certainly is not what it was, say ten years ago. Times have changed and many architects heave sighs. There is no more fun in the game, for no longer is there money to be spent in making things beautiful with costly materials and elaborate decoration as yesterday we were wont to do. Glancing at this decoration of yesterday, however, one is often thankful that we can indeed no longer afford it. All the funds are absorbed in the costly process of inducing a few men to soil their hands for a few hours every day laying brick, mixing concrete and like necessary operations. Then there is the architect's own fee. He must contrive to bring that within the appropriation.

It is indeed a mournful situation viewed from this angle, yet never has an apparently adverse condition been at the same time so lively. On all hands rivets are ringing, buildings are going up.

The architect might as well never have wasted his time learning to design. His job is now that of financial engineer, his time spent in cutting, scraping and shoe-horning, trying to produce something, without time to

worry too much over how that thing will look. The practice of architecture today is not a luxury, no longer a career for the inoffensive esthete. The architect's office is not a studio, it is a workshop.

Occasionally one is approached by a rich client or a university wallowing in some recent bequest, but that is the exception, not the rule. In schools of architecture, how many of the problems given out have been under the theoretical patronage of a "certain wealthy gentleman"? But today the actual wealthy gentleman has almost ceased to function. The theoretical old darling may continue discharging his function within school walls, but his counterpart without has been superseded. Art and architecture no longer function upon a basis of patronage. Architecture is competing in the great modern struggle to survive through fitness.

Naturally with this condition the architect of yesterday is somewhat depressed. To design in the new way leaves out that comforting guarantee of certain assured styles. It leaves out the delightful shelves of books full of photographs of the most charming buildings.

If it turns the office from a water color studio into a hive of calculation and investigation and experimentation, it is because what the situation demands is more and more buildings in more and more of a hurry and at an ever greater cost. There is little time for delving in books while this is going on, and little to be found in them which one may use. It is too costly on all counts. Time means money, for the draftsman too must live.



Courtesy of Ferrobrandt, Inc.

FIG. 61—"LA DANSE"

Fire Screen. By Edgar Brandt



FIG. 62—CONGO ROOM, HOTEL ALAMAC



Courtesy of Winold Reiss

FIG. 63—FIVE METAL PANEL, HOTEL ALAMAC

By Winold Reiss

And carved stone ornament or carved wooden ornament can hardly be expected from funds, the greatest part of which must go for steel, elevators, and plumbing. Yet something beautiful has eventually come from all this, and if we look with open minds we may behold it.

The answer to the question, what is our modern architecture, might be that it is an irreducible minimum. It is four-fifths sacrifice and one-fifth precious new ore.

Our modern architecture is frankly commercial, at least that portion of it which may be reckoned vital. It is in the field of commercial work that our most significant geniuses have found themselves for the very reason that they have had to merge the desire for personal expression with the hard facts of a problem. They have thought less about themselves and more about finding out something for all to share; something logically fitted to new conditions.

It is axiomatic to say that the new needs of man can best be met by the newest materials used in the newest way. Conversely, no ancient purpose may be served by a brand new thing.

If we discount commercial work, there are today few remaining sources of commissions for the architect. Church work, university work, competitions and the plums that fall from a few richly freighted trees about make up the count. None of these fields of work however offers an opportunity to the architect com-

parable to that afforded by the work he shrinks from, that which is slowly undermining his ancient status and industrializing him. Can he escape the situation?

He can by falling back on an independent fortune or preparing for a life of self-sacrifice. A practice consisting of domestic work is a luxury, and large houses are becoming scarce as even the wealthy find it difficult to maintain large establishments. To win a large competition is the lot of the exalted, and to lose one a costly proceeding. The universities employ a chosen few.

But as well as what may be gotten out of the practice of architecture today, what may an architect put into it? Who puts most in gets most out. What are the chances of doing this now in other than commercial work?

The average architect viewing a commission to design a church receives it with the advice that it is to be Gothic or not Gothic, according to the inclination of the building committee's prejudice. If he has his own choice the chances are he will anyway do the Gothic church he has always wanted to do. Some do not, yet the first significant instance of this occurs in France, at Le Raincy, near the Ourcq, where a Catholic church has been entirely constructed of reinforced concrete after a pattern never before beheld by man. Its articulation is as rational as the bony structure of a fish and it possesses great beauty of mass, Fig. 19.

It may be argued that religion is an ancient immutable factor of life, and hence the architecture which en-

shrines it should be of its hereditary character. That accounts for the leaning toward Gothic, or toward the Wren type of church which is our Puritanical pattern. But it has particularly to be demonstrated today that religion is an immutable factor since it has in the past many times changed at least its outward form.

The names of several of our greatest modern architects are coupled with church architecture. This is true in the case of the late Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. Starting with a splendid technical knowledge of the ancient styles, he gradually developed a style of his own, until his latest works, notably St. Bartholomew's on Park Avenue, have a most concentrated individuality. One may recognize the elements of many styles blended together to express the feeling of Mr. Goodhue, but the effect is unique and beautiful. Yet the type of work in which he specialized might have prevented Mr. Goodhue from doing more than finding new dresses for a problem already arrived at its structural solution, had we not seen in the Kansas War Memorial a demonstration of his ability to innovate on another theme. His originality was not mannerism, he did old things in a new way. His contribution of a large vocabulary of new forms as well as departures in decoration are the record of one man, who, existing at the turn of the tide, could not resist the temptation to be borne by it a little way into new seas, and who must have tasted the thrills of the explorer.

Charles Z. Klauder of Philadelphia is the possessor of

an individuality with which he penetrates the fixed mysteries of Gothic and yet therefrom emerges. In the hands of Mr. Klauder, Gothic is again taking a step forward. Just how far it will proceed to go beneath his dextrous guidance remains to be seen. He cannot feel himself bound by any ancient law if it be a restriction, a good test for much so-called law, but he will show it full respect if it prove a fundamental limitation. There is less and less of Gothic about the work of Mr. Klauder but more and more of knowledge which is the outcome of his unceasing application to that style over many years. He is in spirit one of our foremost moderns although his point of departure was under cover of style. He has emerged however from all danger of remaining only a Gothicism. He scents the possibilities of his position to accomplish new and wonderful things because it is a new and wonderful modern day. And he has the grand gift of spiritual vision.

Architecturally, the universities are also in a situation somewhat analogous to that of the established churches—their precarious position at the balance of a great tidal swing, at a time when with the liberation of more knowledge we may reorganize ourselves into who knows what new categories. In such a position it is a little difficult to show externally the aspect of a positive condition within. If the Tudor dormitories of Cambridge and Oxford show this positive aspect, they do not satisfy one in the same way when translated to our soil. In England they speak to one of the continuous



Courtesy of F. Schumacher and Company

FIG. 64—ENSEMBLE BY F. SCHUMACHER AND COMPANY

Photograph by Merrill



Courtesy of Winold Reiss

FIG. 65, FIG. 66-INTERIORS OF CRILLON RESTAURANT

By Winold Reiss

homogeneity of the race that gave them being, which is a true value. Here, they speak of something existing in men's minds, not in actuality. They are part of our make-believe existence, the best we can do now. Mr. Klauder's university in a tower is the first foreshadowing of new arrangements in educational values, although that tower is still Gothic in style. Fig. 31. It is not because it is conceived as a tower, that is perhaps not necessary, but because it is a step toward welding the traditional values which must not perish, with the essentially modern ones. The patronage of universities does not today harbor any too vital an opportunity for one seeking to modernize architecture. The beautiful Harkness Memorial Quadrangle at Yale is a gentle summing up of existing collegiate architecture carried out in the minutest detail. Within its cloistered calm we perform the solemn worship of our ideal of the past. No one could dream a dream of the future, within the portals of the new Gothic chapel at Princeton.

Eventually, if we wish to discover truly modern architecture, we must turn to the vulgar turbulent vortex of democratic industrial life, to the noise and confusion of our workaday breadwinning existence. Here it rears its head so we may not mistake it. It is found in steel, in concrete, in the power of the living day. It roars beneath us and looms above us.

The New York zoning law crystallized the skyscraper. Enacted for the purpose of preventing city streets from becoming too dark and too airless, its im-

mediate result was to impose a mold for the tops of tall buildings. A New York building lot is now no longer a rectangle in one plane. It is a tall space-enclosing envelope, up inside which the building may pour but not overflow. The possibilities of this enactment were quickly realized by Mr. Harvey Corbett, the pioneer of the new skyscraper. His Bush Terminal building on Forty-second Street, the first "setback" skyscraper, contains his office soaring high above the city in its topmost floor, where he may look off and watch the fulfillment of his prophecy.

In effect, the zoning law rules that a building, after rising a certain number of stories from the sidewalk, must set back a few feet whence it may continue to ascend to a point where it must once more jog back, and so on up with variations. It has given to the high building plastic form which it formerly lacked and supplied in place of applied pilasters, string courses and cornices, a sturdy play of light and shade. The tall buildings now seem to have mass and stamina. They are different from anything ever seen before and, what is more, beautiful. The change in mass form is rapidly and silently revolutionizing the entire fabric. The rest of the design may now straighten itself out, discard outlived features of the transitional phase and readjust the question of ornament.

Windows for example, ever one of the problems of architecture and the implacable foe of the classical styles, have never been worse than when punched by

the hundreds in an enormous blank wall. This was the old skyscraper, the Flatiron building or the Metropolitan Tower. A wall that pretends to be a wall hates to be shot full of holes. It should be allowed to restate itself in some other terms as did the wall of the cathedral when it became merely a support to the roof occurring between enormous windows. The recent skyscraper walls are essentially this, in that they do not seek to hide the steel structure just beneath the surface, which bears all the weight, but by sinking the wall between these vertical columns create a series of tall channels in which the windows occur unobtrusively in ascending systems.

Mr. Raymond Hood, the designer of the American Radiator building, tells an amusing story of how he came to choose black brick as the material for that building. Windows, he was arguing, wreck the walls of our tall buildings, because they make black holes. They make a wall look like a waffle. Why not then have a black wall which would absorb the black holes? The black wall was built, producing, save where a window reflects the sky, the solidest building in New York.

Mr. Hood is at present designing a London office for the American Radiator Company which is to be built with polished granite facing to the steel structure, and with metal trim and decoration in polished steel and gold. The design is based on requirements alone, which means plan, ceiling heights, and the proper-sized window. Beauty is never a first consideration. In this build-

ing, however, perfect simplicity with an exquisite surface and carefully refined detail are producing the most satisfying beauty.

Among the most interesting examples of recent work in New York City stands the Barclay Vesey building, which towers above the lower western water front like the keep of an enormous château fort. It was designed by McKenzie, Voorhees and Gmelin. In it windows have been reduced to a minimum and are so perfectly controlled in their vertical flights as to detract little from the great power of the walls which are curiously reminiscent of the color of the Giralda tower. The vertical cleaving of the building and its immense setback produce such shadows as linger in mountain gorges. A series of great buttress-like blocks break against the sky at the final stage and complete the effect of the whole having been built by giants. Nowhere upon the entire mass appears any useless ornament. It would be lost and could add little to the beauty of complete fitness with which it is already invested. About the water front entrance and in the great vestibule one begins to find the ornament. It is fine in scale and amusingly devised from marine sources, suggesting the proximity of the sea and maritime commerce. The function of decorative detail, says Mr. Walker, who had much to do with this building, is to entertain without obtruding. He goes on to say that when asked his opinion of the great concourse of the Pennsylvania Station, a certain oriental stated he believed it to be the most restless interior of his ac-

quaintance. "Because," he said, "it forces you back on yourself so that you wander aimlessly around or buy a newspaper." There is nothing to amuse the idle corners of the mind, so that one may sit quietly as in a Gothic church. It is essential that this element of amusement be supplied with classical architecture, which rule the Romans obeyed. Too much order becomes monotony.

Many aspects of our building problem today bear analogy to Eastern architecture. In the building of walls we are no longer dealing with solid masonry supporting its own weight. Our great problem is with high thin walls, or veneers of thin wall hung over skeleton frames. In the East, architects, faced with a scarcity of stone, have always made their walls of clay faced with brick or tile of a finer texture. Into this outer shell or dress have been introduced the beautiful brick patterns we see in the minaret, and the marvelous art of colored tiles perfected by the Persians. This type of wall, frankly of one substance faced with another, is not far from what we are doing here today. To make a high wall look like a thick stone wall bearing its own weight is an illusion, yet this is the tradition we inherit from both our Classic and Gothic sources, styles which matured in lands yielding the finest building stones.

Terra cotta provides the most logical and economical facing for our steel walls. And there are a thousand and one tales told in brick throughout Asia Minor and North Africa, to which we may turn for inspiration. Color is gradually creeping back into our architecture

as a component of this. A new art of colored tile decoration is in the making which may rival the palmy days of Mohammedan art in Africa and Spain. And there is another even more interesting analogy here with the great art of the followers of the Prophet.

Mohammedan decoration was limited to inanimate and geometric motifs. The beautiful walls of the Alhambra and Alcazar are tremendous feats in applied mathematics. Our great modern structures owe their beauty of form as well as their very existence to mathematics. Great bridges are geometric diagrams perpetuated in steel. Does not this suggest the use of geometric ornament as the most appropriate form of decoration for geometric structure? The argument should not be carried too far, but what could be simpler than to arrange our terra cotta walls in the geometric patterns they so easily fall into? The French building at Fifth Avenue and Forty-fifth Street is a step in this direction, Fig. 30.

Among the most intelligent innovators of today is Mr. Kahn of the firm of Buchmann and Kahn. Within ten years he has designed and seen executed an unusual number of buildings in New York City. What an opportunity to get experience, when one remembers the scarcity of commissions in other countries, to experiment and advance! This is precisely why our architecture has outstripped every other art in this country. Mr. Kahn's buildings are in the heart of New York City and of strictly commercial type, where the building

must pay from the start. Mr. Kahn seems to have been the man who from the start comprehended the applicability of Eastern work to our needs. He is also a connoisseur and collector of Persian antiquities. He has in all his work shown an ability to make a building itself seem in the end to consist of nothing except just what is structurally necessary, and yet have interest. There is no subterfuge, nothing is covered up. Here is the solution of the economic difficulty, serving the double end of efficiency and beauty. Turning to Persian prototypes, he contrives the decoration in the brickwork of which his walls are usually made. About the entrance metal is used in grills, doors and show windows. Inside the vestibule, ceilings of plaster are usually in full color, the walls plain with an interesting floor carried out in some modern floor composition laid as tile, and elevator doors enriched usually with embossed metal. In this connection he has been most fortunate in employing the services of Gaston Lachaise, an American metal worker who created the beautiful bronze doors representing the four seasons, shown in Figs. 37-38.

Although these buildings of Mr. Kahn's are not in the class of very high buildings, they represent a type, ever increasing in numbers, which seem adjusted more nearly to a balance of the human and economic elements. It is their completely thought-out adequacy that makes them of signal importance. For if beauty or at least dignity is to be found in the very cheapest methods of modern construction, there will soon be no excuse

for the perpetration of ugliness in the shape of garages, gasoline stands and what not excrescences of modern life that now mar both street and landscape.

The Shelton Hotel, Fig. 36, on Lexington Avenue, was designed by Mr. Harmon and remains one of the most beautifully massed and detailed structures in New York City. It was designed from models, as Mr. Harmon says, and in it he attempted to eliminate all horizontal lines and leave only the soaring verticals. High buildings he feels should do this, because horizontal lines in a wall which still continues to run up, make the vertical lines seen above them appear to lean outward. This is an optical illusion, but a fact. The scale of the decoration at the top of this tower is for once adequate to its task and the play of shadow about the great buttressing masses always beautiful. The color is perhaps best of all.

Whether or not the skyscraper in itself is the most important development in American architecture is a debatable question. One may at least say it has taught our architects how to think again. It has provided the problem which in its solution marks the first real contribution of America to the history of architecture. Therein lies its significance and not in the conjecture that America will become a land of towering cities.

The skyscraper is a product of our industrial situation in a special case. It is warranted in New York by the concentration of population in an importantly located city, which happens to be long and narrow,

utterly unfit in its geography for the task it must perform. The skyscraper is for New York an expedient, a way out of a situation which, take it or leave it, is an important one. It is just such a situation that the quixotic mind and energy of man love to dominate. The very futility of the skyscraper fits it for a career of transient glory, symbol of a welling up of creative energy panting to surmount worthy obstacles. It is an expression of our unheeding youthful vitality, the genius of the day. By ingenuity and courage we have set down in one spot a great vertical measure of our strength and made it fit and beautiful. It is our very own effort.

It is logical to suppose that the skyscraper will cease to multiply. An automatic law will bring about some balance of the forces acting to produce it which will prove a better solution for humanity. They are too high and influence too much ground space immediately about them to permit of their increasing concentration. They would drag an even more topheavy situation of forced transportation, forced hygiene after them, and before that time comes reason will have reasserted itself. Already there are indications of this. It is being pointed out that all is not well and despite the fact that they may for some time to come serve the all-powerful gods of finance, they foreshadow an unsustainable condition which will become their own undoing.

The tremendous conceptions of Mr. Hugh Ferriss of a future New York are breath-taking. What visions of titanicly organized Babels soaring dizzily into the

clouds! Not so much from their height as from their significance they give us a feeling of faintness. They never picture the dead lying 'midst hellish racket at the bottoms of sunless cañons. They are views taken optimistically from the happy upper reaches, where one might also look off in the other direction, over thousands of miles of empty country, and ask, "Why this?" It is not so much that we might not school ourselves in a few generations to stand the racket of it (we have done a lot in this direction already) but that a sense of proportion must tell us of its extreme unnecessary, its fearful cost, to gain what? It costs us little or nothing to live under the trees and we are happy there. The more artificially we live the heavier we pay, the harder we work, to be just about as happy. The skyscraper will attain its greatest beauty as it reaches a maximum of usefulness. It is almost there now.

Although hundreds of dwellings, libraries and universities have been erected since the completion of the first high steel building, it is still more modern than the very latest of those. We have seen almost every other type of building before. The Lincoln Memorial is a Greek temple, the Pennsylvania Station of New York a Roman bath, symbols of old human needs.

Excepting the apartment house, domestic architecture has far less progress to report than commercial because it houses a very ancient if somewhat altered function. We have always dwelt, if we have not always been industrialized. The new thing has naturally found a new shell. Living is the dog that is being wagged by

the economic tail. Living occurs as a necessary adjunct of industrial civilization and as such, its premises are being cramped. Compared to the way in which they formerly inhabited houses, people today perch in them for a few minutes at a time, like birds on their branches. There is less and less incentive to perch longer as our migratory habits increase.

If we eliminate the country estates and city houses of those able to afford such luxury and descend to the ever sagging level of the average taxpayer we find him existing in two ways. If he lives within the confines of the city, he is coming to occupy apartments as rapidly as these are built and placed at his convenience. Even small country towns now have their apartments. Here is the part steel is playing on the other side of our lives.

If on the other hand he has been persuaded that the only way is to live on the land and "own your own home," he is found in some sort of a jaunty little box herded together with others of his kind in certain oddly named suburbs of the town. This little box cost terrifically to build, not that as it stands it is worth that sum. It is rather like a ready-to-wear suit.

These boxes are either all the same, every other one reversed, and stand in the fearful endless ranks of the cheaper variety, or running the gamut of every known material and style they dot the landscape like little separate experiments in doll housing. Architecture has made little advance here because of a fundamentally unsound basis of the whole performance.

For the people who own these houses to buy and operate such independent establishments is a gesture of great-hearted generosity toward the real estate operators. The maintenance of so many small units is an extravagant and disorganized spectacle. Coöperative living of some sort is about to become necessary, whatever its drawbacks may be.

That is why the first mentioned species of villa is preferable to the second and costlier. It is already in a sense coöperative, in its standardization of type. It merely remains for the architect to create that pattern of horizontal rather than vertical apartment house which shall combine the advantages of its city relation with those of a bit of garden. This will be done by taking advantage of the new building materials out of which walls, floors and roofs may now be made, those which have proven themselves permanent and fireproof, plus concrete and steel. It has already been accomplished in meeting the problem of housing industrial communities, expanding rapidly as during the war. But it was cheaply done at that time and the results therefore disappointing. The outskirts of Bridgeport, Connecticut, contain some of the most intelligent examples of this attempt, which still, however, fall short of a complete realization of the problem. Here they persist in sustaining the Colonial tradition in design, which could not be well done and which, anything short of well done, is bad. It is a transitional phase and not fully efficient despite excellent planning. People live amicably in

coöperative apartments in the cities. They can do so even more readily with the help of the country.

In the city apartment house we find something as essentially modern as the commercial skyscraper, something which is helping to make over modern life. Its appearance is the very aspect of highly specialized existence already arrived, perfectly controlled. We need not look for anything more modern than Park Avenue above Forty-fourth Street, for although the old regalia of architecture is still in evidence, it clings with difficulty to mountainous new shapes which mean the basic change is effected. Gradually the minor details will alter and conform to this. Walls will become thinner with the windows occurring as glass-filled rectangular gaps in the structural wall. Windows will cease to be individual spots as today they continue to be from days gone by when there were fewer in a wall. Color will come more and more to take the place of carved decoration.

Flatness is the note to be forced to an issue, until it begins to yield beauty rather than denatured half-hearted attempts in a plastic direction. The thin dress over a steel wall is necessarily flat and it hangs in vertical strips, giving a sleek practical look.

Light is precious in city streets, which means that overhanging cornices have gone. They were a long way from home high in the air. It has taken a generation of thought to realize this and abandon them. Now how simple it looks. One has but to compare the Flatiron building with the Shelton Hotel.

CHAPTER IX

Modern American Decorators and Craftsmen—I

EVEN TO THE PERSON LEAST INTERESTED IN ART IT must have become apparent that something has hit the shop windows. A wave of brilliant color is spreading, and one sees the most incomprehensible designs in silk scarves, dress goods and cretonnes. They look like the covers of *Vanity Fair* or the *New Yorker*, frivolous, gay—but what are they? Where do they come from? Is this the first zephyr of a breeze which will shortly spring up and grow to a steady trade wind? It hardly seems possible that anything so bizarre, so startlingly different can have come to occupy space in the windows of a conservative department store. Surely it will not last, but like all fads be soon forgotten.

On the continent, which, we might as well be frank to admit, is the source of most of this, it has ceased to be a fad. Quite the contrary, there it is growing the healthy growth of a live thing.

When an art has been introduced from one country into another, it begins first showing itself in the lesser things. It does not land all at once full grown and proceed to stay. When the Renaissance crept into France from Italy, it showed first as curious little bits of a new sort of carving, done by Italians working on the scaffold

with French masons. At first the French masons represented this and clung to their Gothic tradition. Then they "fell for" the new, got the trick of it, and made it their own.

The new spirit in design is coming into this country in much this same way. Creeping in about the edges it fastens first upon objects of a transitory and frivolous nature. We do not stand up and embrace it all at once, far from it, but proceed none the less to be amused by it in advertisements or on the covers of magazines we throw away. It does very nicely too for a touch of color in summer sport wear.

We are even in the very initial stages of taking it up and developing our own modernist designers. No sooner do we commence this, however, than the whole thing begins subtly changing, no longer resembling France or Austria, but the United States.

These innovations in branches of the fine arts aside from architecture are very different from the internal revolution which has transformed this latter with no outside assistance. Our new architecture has sprung literally full-grown from quite its own irrepressible abundance of vitality. The decorative touches with which we will now proceed to enliven it do not so spontaneously arise.

It is undoubtedly to the great exhibition of decorative arts held in Paris in 1925 that we owe the slight modern impetus found here today. That portion of the American public who wander about Europe of a sum-

mer, there and for the first time came in contact with the new spirit in design. American buyers, too, peered timidly at what they saw there, and a few bold spirits purchased. If we were not invited to participate in that exposition as exhibitors it was because we were not prepared to do so, yet we then and there began our preparation for the next affair of the sort.

To further stimulate interest in the new direction, there came from France during 1926, a loan exhibit of furniture, hangings, ceramics, iron, and glassware chosen from French work already shown at the Exposition. Its first stop was at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, where, under the direction of Mr. Richard Bach, a splendid opportunity was afforded the public to see what this talk of modern decorative art was all about. At the same time, purchases were made from the sources which had produced these objects, and now a permanent exhibition of modern work is installed in the new wing with fine examples of the furniture of Rhulemann, Sué and Mare, and Dufrêne, the iron work of Brandt, and the glass and ceramics of Lalique, Décorchemont and Decœur. One will be amply repaid for a visit to this room on making the acquaintance of an interesting ebony, gold and pigskin writing desk by Rhulemann.

Here then is what has made New York blaze forth in this galaxy of new color, these strangely designed fabrics and window dressings. On the surface we are



FIG. 67—DRESSING-TABLE BY FRANKL



FIG. 68—BOOKCASE BY FRANKL

Photographs by the White Studios

Courtesy of Mr. Frankl



Courtesy of Mr. Frankl

FIG. 69—CABINET BY FRANKL

Photograph by Harting

beginning to feel the stimulus, the joy, of new, gay, free and imaginative things.

This exhibition already seen at the Metropolitan Museum is now making its way about the country under the auspices of the American Association of Museums whose director, Professor C. R. Richards, is deeply absorbed in the problem of revitalizing our industrial arts. Professor Richards is a profound student of the history of this whole movement, from the days of l'Art Nouveau, and understands the extreme significance to industry of the numbers of new technical processes as well as the philosophy back of them.

One has but to read the books of Le Corbusier to appreciate the fact that it amounts to more than a fad in France. History is being made as this exhibition slowly tours our land. It is what we have needed to begin the slow breaking down of that deadlock existing between the wholesale buyer and the purchasing public. We are not so afraid to know a suspicious character once he has been seen in respectable company. The only danger is that he may subsequently enjoy an all too ardent popular favor.

Two other organizations are promoting the spread of modernism in our midst. One is the Art in Trades Club, to which belong almost all who are connected with our industrial arts. Buyers, manufacturers, decorators, designers and advertisers meet here on a common footing to discuss art from their different angles and seek to bring about a closer understanding between

those forever warring elements, the material and the ideal, which have today practically stalled our own efforts to advance. It was for this purpose the club was formed and it carries on a vigorous propaganda in all directions. Competitions are held and prizes awarded in an effort to unearth new talent in the field of design. Lecturers discuss the problems of the market, buying policies and design.

The Art Alliance with headquarters at the Art Center in New York City is another institution organized to help bring before the public the work of individual craftsmen. An interesting exhibition held in the winter of 1925, showed the very modern work of such designers as Arthur Crisp, who makes batiks and bed spreads, Max Kuehne, an all-around craftsman, maker of chests, beds, mirrors, screens and tables showing remarkable originality and beauty of modern tendency, Walter Kantack, the metal worker, and the Arden Studios. Contemporary with the French show, at the Metropolitan Museum, this exhibition of American work, while not in the same category, afforded a most interesting comparison. It made one wish some of the talent displayed there might be ushered from under its bushel and given to the public through industrial channels.

In an effort to stimulate designers to work in the modern manner, the Art in Trades Club, in 1925, announced a competition with prizes to be given for the best design of a modern ensemble. Manufacturers

agreed to execute the winning design and put the results on the market. Here was an excellent chance to show what could be done.

All the competitors were placed hors concours for failure to follow the program. There were no American



FIG. 70—TWO PENDANT LAMPS

By Ferrobrandt, Inc.

designers capable of quite grasping the modern manner, a discouraging if illuminating discovery.

M. Bouy is a figure of great importance in our field. He is the head of "Ferrobrandt," Edgar Brandt's organization in this country, and does all the designing, chiefly iron work, which comes from his workshop. M. Bouy is a Frenchman but he has espoused the cause of America in his present capacity. Trained in France and basing his design upon the tradition of Edgar

Brandt, still he feels the urge to design in an American spirit and this he is proceeding to do. He is an accomplished artist and a thinker as well. He senses our awakening spirit as one seeking to soar and expand, to mount higher and higher with swiftness as we put story after story on our great buildings. He loves clean spacious colors in flat bands and very little relief to such moldings as are used. There must be life, verve, sinuosity, the curves which one finds in living things, plants and animals. This is the keynote to his iron work, which, "strong, delicate and alive," may be made the material for almost anything. He pays the greatest attention to refinement of detail without which nothing may be called "exquisite." A visit to the Ferrobrandt show rooms in the Park Lexington building at Forty-seventh Street and Park Avenue, New York City, will repay the student of the new art.

The two best examples of Ferrobrandt work designed by M. Bouy in New York are the Cheney Brothers' Silk building and the suite of offices and living quarters of Mr. Catts in the Park Lexington building. Fig. 55 shows a bedroom in the latter suite. The Cheney building is a museum of beautiful iron work, outside and in, from the exquisitely wrought doors to the curious and exotic standards for the draping of silks. And I may say here that equally modern and beautiful are many of the silks displayed thereon. In the Catts offices a rich simplicity is carried out in the curiously flat tendency of walls, furniture and color. Chaste,

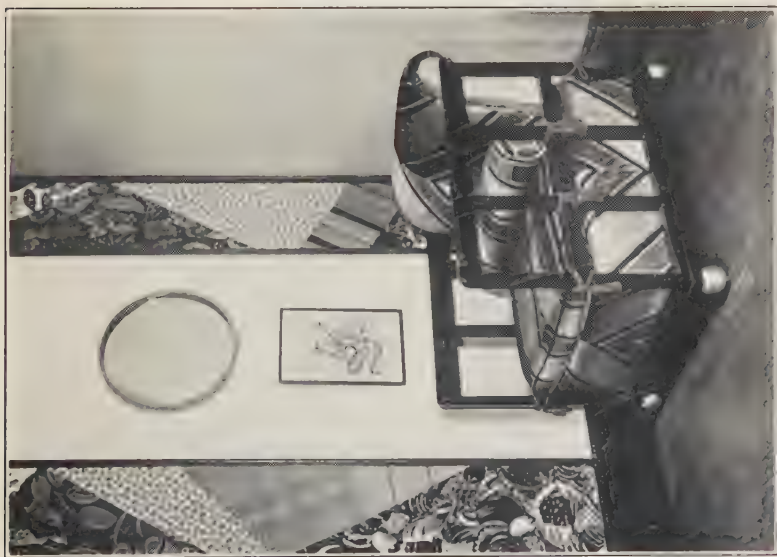


FIG. 71-CHAIR AND SCREEN BY FRANKL



FIG. 72-CHAIR AND CABINET BY FRANKL

Photograph by Harting

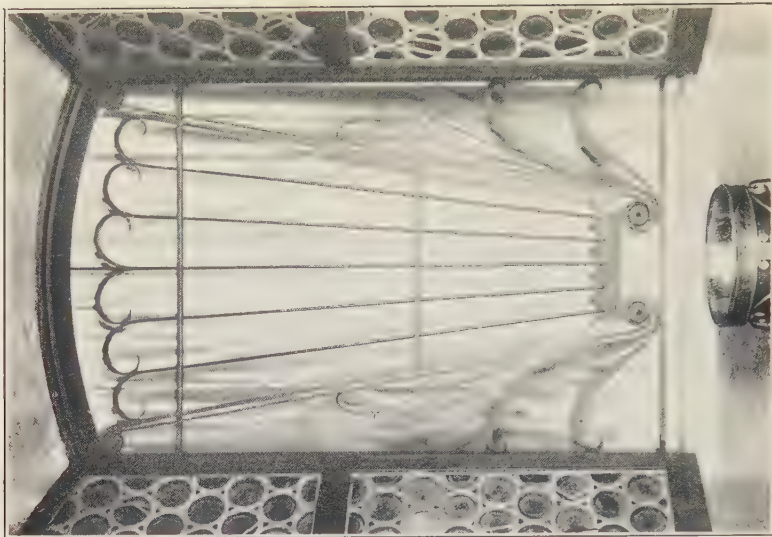
Courtesy of Mr. Frankl



Courtesy of Rena Rosenthal

FIG. 73—OBJECTS FROM RENA ROSENTHAL

Photograph by the Author



Courtesy of Kantack and Company, Inc.

FIG. 74—WINDOW GRILL BY KANTACK AND COMPANY, INC.

though not austere, the efficient silence of modern business is perfectly expressed in beautiful unbroken panels of wood from floor to ceiling.

Ferrobrandt iron work enjoys a lively sale in the West, in Detroit for example, where they at once



FIG. 75—WROUGHT IRON SILK STANDARD

By Ferrobrandt, Inc.

espoused its beauty as their own. Are our western people more of the 20th century than ourselves of the East? Will they lead the way?

M. Bouy, sympathetic to our needs, full of ideas, deeply, logically intelligent, divines the future of art in this country, to the development of which his contribution is already rich.

West of Fifth Avenue on Forty-eighth Street are the Frankl Galleries of which Mr. Frankl is the genius. His wares, consisting of furniture, hangings, ceramics,

etc., are in part imported and in part designed by himself. After long years of trying to show the public that modern art was less dangerous than beautiful, courageous years of scant success, Mr. Frankl is at length, and partly due to his own efforts, in a most advantageous situation, for as the taste for things modern permeates our society, the field is almost all his. Mr. Frankl imports Poirer papers and objects in pottery and porcelain from Vienna. His personality invests the place with a sense of audacious quiet, amusing and rich in color. He has designed and made in his own ateliers, skyscraper bookcases, strange slender chests of drawers with a most delicious metallic finish, odd chairs and tables sometimes of metal, all kept very flat and treated in rich all-over colors with different colored edges. There is almost the suggestion of the oriental about his designs. Mr. Frankl has designed many interiors as well as a quantity of charming garden furniture, benches, chairs, tea tables and the like where he knows how to use sheet iron in quite a pleasant fashion, picking out the rivet heads most amusingly in color. He changes his show window every day and manages a continual passage of the most delightful rich color, a bit playful, a bit sophisticated, excitingly exotic.

Another establishment where one may acquaint oneself with modern art from beyond the sea is the shop of Mme. Rena Rosenthal, who is the sister of Mr. Kahn, the architect, at 520 Madison Avenue. Mme. Rosenthal says, "Modern art objects chosen with discretion will

fit in any American interior. I believe in using the creations of living artists of America and Europe." Her shop window and the interior behind it are a fairyland of strange and delicate objects, everything from the tiniest Viennese brass figures to beautiful pottery bowls and vases of Persian blue. Her objects are small and her choice in buying them wide in its variety. Many of her wares she designs herself and has made for her in Germany and Austria. There is no use trying to get it done in this country, not yet. Her native products indicate this. It is the influence of Dagobert Pêche one feels here, of the Wiener Werkstaette, of the Austrian love of color and whimsical form. Things are seen against black backgrounds. She has beautiful silk scarves of cubistic design, and unsuspected laces in modern patterns, in fact a little museum of the minor arts of today.

Lucien Bernhard is a German artist who has been in this country about three years. An example of his foreign work is shown in Figs. 86-87, two very interesting interiors from the same house. The bedroom is in the strictly modern German phase in which Chinese influence comes into the furniture. M. Bernhard intends remaining in this country as he feels it will not be long ere we are swept by a wave of modernism. That is the worst of it, we may be swept by a wave, but it will not be the thing we are looking for, the real thing.

It is interesting to see that our leading department stores are among the prime movers in sponsoring

modernism, similar to what the larger French houses have done. In October, 1925, John Wanamaker & Co. held a tercentenary pictorial pageant of New York at the inauguration of their new building. The idea was to present graphically the history of Manhattan, from its beginnings until today, and then on into the future. Mr. Harvey Wiley Corbett directed the entire affair. The modern work of interest to us was executed by Robert Winthrop Chanler, Hugh Ferriss, Vladimir Bobritsky and Victor Haveman.

Hugh Ferriss painted a series of remarkable panels depicting Harvey Corbett's conception of the future New York City. These paintings, called the "Titans," showed a vision of the city to come, piling mountain on mountain to reach the sky.

In advertising and window dressing, John Wanamaker & Co. use the new manner. Furthermore, Mr. R. H. Waldo, advertising counsel for the concern, has permitted me to quote him as saying that John Wanamaker believes in the future of the new style and is making it a policy to let the public have as much as they will absorb.

At the time of the tercentenary a most startlingly modern note was struck in the room decorated by the two Russian artists, Bobritsky and Haveman. This room, as may be seen from the illustration, Fig. 48, was carried out in a futuristic manner, typical of Russian decorative work since the war. The influence of Com-

munism may be seen in the decidedly industrial atmosphere lent by the recurrence of pieces of machinery in the pattern. Mr. Bobritsky is also the creator of most of John Wanamaker's newspaper advertising. He uses the same manner in his popular covers for *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, and the *New Yorker*.

Other large department stores are demonstrating a willingness to be converted to the new manner, particularly for purposes of advertising. Lord & Taylor, during the autumn of 1925, exhibited the modernist room shown in Fig. 53, the work of the decorating department of the store. This room had painted walls and colored furniture of conservatively modern design executed for the occasion. Some of these pieces are still in stock, which does not speak well for the success of the venture. On the seventh floor, the decorating department carries an excellent assortment of imported objects, French, German, Austrian, and Italian. There are screens made from Poiret papers, porcelain and china bowls, vases, lamps, lamp shades and brasses. Although, to be sure, these objects are imported, their very presence indicates that the public are buying modern stuff. In their advertising and particularly in their beautiful window displays Lord & Taylor employ the French artists, Drian and Boutet de Monvel. Their windows lend to that part of Fifth Avenue an atmosphere of modern Paris, which, if not our own, is tremendously stimulating.

Advertising is naturally one of the readiest outlets

for modern art. Bonwit Teller & Co. are employing Rigal, a Spaniard, an example of whose sculpturesque posters is seen in Fig. 54. R. H. Macy & Co. carry in their silk department *crêpe de chine* printed in assortments of eight or ten variously colored cubist designs. Mr. Graham of that department remarks, "We are toning up buying. People can no longer find here bad designs to gratify bad taste."

There are as yet few decorators who have the temerity to work frankly in a modern manner. Their work is found more often in restaurants and places of amusement than in homes. This is indicative of the way we are accustoming ourselves to the new manner before taking it to our bosoms.

The Austrian artist, Winold Reiss, whose work is undoubtedly familiar to most people, was the author of the first experiment of this sort in New York City. Mr. Reiss has now been in this country thirteen years. Seven years ago he decorated the old Crillon restaurant in decidedly modern and thoroughly American taste, using flat surfaces, broad and colorful painted decoration, based on the patterns found in Navajo blankets and Indian pottery. He has also created the interiors of the Restaurant Robert, Winifred McDonald's restaurant at Forest Hills, Long Island, and one of the Longchamps restaurants. More recently, with the assistance of his brother he carried out the very modern decorations in the dining and grill rooms of the Hotel Alamac. The dance floor is painted startlingly in the

manner of the Congo, all in most brilliant color, showing enormous tropical designs, negro masks, and most ingenious idol-like chairs executed with a tremendous vigor and fidelity to the Congo spirit. (See Fig. 62.) In the grill room of this same hotel, he has used very beautiful panels, made of five different metals, in a manner hard to describe and best seen in the illustration, Fig. 63.

The use of this innovation by Mr. Reiss corresponds to the increasing use of metal for decorative purposes. He has most recently completed the two floors of the new Crillon Restaurant at Forty-eighth Street and Lexington Avenue. This is again a riot of beautiful color, red, gold and white, with the introduction of most ingenious wall lights in the shape of paintings made of flat sections of wood in relief lighted from a concealed source within the boxlike frame. The whole smacks of the Viennese, gay and at the same time delicate. Here too he uses much metal. Mr. Reiss is a firm believer in the imminence of a golden age of art in this country, a renaissance, as he says. Archeologist, painter and illustrator, he is also a stimulating teacher, one who is working mightily to instill new life, new ideas.

The firm of Richter and Kolb of New York City have used a modern spirit in the execution of certain frescoes and painted decoration. They are the authors of the small powder room in the Hofbrau House at Broadway and Fifty-third Street, New York, a very modern creation, worked out in bright colors. Mr.

Seidell of this firm is thoroughly acquainted with the history of European modern decoration from its beginnings until today. He feels that there is a taint of fad about the whole business and points out that since so many who were formerly but craftsmen have taken the field in an attempt to become decorators, the standard of work has fallen off.

The scarcity of American homes decorated in the modernist manner makes it tantalizing, for one may not see it, to know that Gloria Swanson has one executed by Mr. LeRoy Ward, in the top of the Park Chambers.

John Erwin of the firm of Jones and Erwin is an interesting man to talk to on modern decoration. He believes the style of the Regency comes as near as any to being akin to the modern spirit. He delights in the flat metal work, tin flowers, crystal, feathers and like frivolities employed by decorators in those days. He is designing and having executed furniture made of wood, mirrors and tin. This furniture is adapted to the usages of modern life, to the attitudes we strike with our lolling bodies accustomed to sports demanding low-seated deep chairs, and correspondingly low tables. He has studied the way in which foreign manufacturers of modernist furniture have already standardized their moldings for industrial production. His great difficulty is in finding people to sympathetically carry out his designs. All of his forms are extremely simple and of geometric nature, having a feeling of angular simplicity. With spheres and sheets of fluted tin, he mixes a



FIG. 76-CHENEY



FIG. 77-CHENBY

curious touch of the quaintly fantastic. His work is typical of what I have called the modern style. No two objects within its scope may be alike, yet they are conceived in that essentially new spirit which is interpretive of our life today, and in that sense are all alike. Mr. Erwin is actually succeeding in introducing his furniture into the homes of his clients.

On the crest of the wave caused by the great exposition of decorative art in Paris, Schumacher, the large fabric manufacturer, displayed a modern French interior, designed for them in Paris. Most of the fabrics used had been shown at the exposition, and the purpose of this room was to show us these new stuffs in their equally new environment. The furniture and woodwork were by Dubocq and the particularly lovely material of the frieze by Paul Follot. While hardly successful as an ensemble, yet most of the separate pieces used in this room were by themselves of high merit. There was a lamp by Edgar Brandt, glass by Lalique, a chandelier by Galle of Nancy, and two pieces of ceramic by Mayodin Jean.

Schumacher's now carry among their stock, as well as many modern imported fabrics, some brocades of native design, of which one in particular is the very beautiful "Lalique pattern" based on the fountain motif so popular among French designers. The number of large manufacturing concerns and wholesale dealers who have taken notice of the new movement is still, however, relatively small. It is slow to get under way.

While people are not easily dislodged from their comfortable position of traditional taste it is also a matter of some difficulty to find designers capable of breaking away from the time-honored patterns taught them in the schools and shops.

This is the main trouble, according to Mr. Wingert of the Manchester Hand Prints concern. This house, which manufactures only hand-blocked fabrics, is attempting to raise the artistic level of American products. The dearth of designers young or old, turned out by schools or trained in the trade, who can conceive original designs, has led Mr. Wingert to send out lecturers wherever designing is taught or practiced, to expound the gospel of modern design and by so doing encourage young artists to wake up. His ideal is an American school of design, the founding of an up-to-date indigenous tradition together with a wave of public enlightenment to guarantee it. It is a most hopeful sign from that justifiable point of view which seeks to rehabilitate our standards of commercial designing not by cultivating a fad for copying foreign patterns, but by stimulating American artists to move ahead again in their own way. The accompanying illustrations (Figs. 78 and 79) show two patterns created by the Manchester Hand Prints, which bear little resemblance to the usual thing. One is somewhat reminiscent of the designs of Paul Poiret. In color they compare more than favorably with the machine-made stuffs.

The scarcity of originality among our native de-

signers was demonstrated in a competition to design a wall-paper pattern held at the Art Center during the winter of 1925. The most interesting design and the one given the prize for originality was submitted by Miss Vasselevsky, a young Russian living in New York City. The design is reproduced here together with another by her, equally charming. There is about them that delicious sense of something which dissolves before the eye, elusive and naïve, Figs. 80 and 81.

Cheney Brothers are pioneers in their new and beautiful setting, the creation of Ferrobrandt, and in turning out silks which vie with the best European products in originality of pattern and beauty of color. It is a fascinating scene one sees upon entering the Cheney display room on the ground floor. The silks are draped upon curiously formed steel standards, or shown in great strips upon a stage at one end of the room, where light is thrown upon them. The whole effect is entirely modern and unlike the crudity of wholesale business one is used to. For the fall of 1926, Cheney Brothers created a number of beautiful new designs to which were given names suggestive of the colors, such as "Ambroon," a reddish-brown amber and maroon, or "Clune," a lovely gray *clair de lune*.

Mallinson also is creating silks in strikingly modern patterns, from designs by Henriette Reiss. The modernist tendency already so firmly established among our silk manufacturers is due to the pace set by French fashions, supreme among women in this country, which

can not exist without the silks, and today all French silks are futuristic or cubistic. It is a cool matter of competition. In this, our silk concerns have the advantage over other industries, from the modernist's point of view.

The United States Wicker Co., of Hoboken, New Jersey, has executed a number of cretonnes in patterns which are a departure from the usual thing. Chambord, Inc., at 559 Madison Avenue, New York City, import almost exclusively the cretonnes of Paul Poirer which enjoy an increasing popularity in summer draperies, upholsteries, and articles of beach attire.

The Potters' Shop, Inc., is the headquarters for American handmade pottery and ceramics of all sorts. It is located at 755 Madison Avenue, New York City. Here, according to the booklet of the Shop, are gathered together on consignment the works of the leading ceramics producers throughout the United States. One cannot leave this shop but with a conviction that the feeling for new forms has crept in to give simplicity and breadth to modern pottery and that great skill is being shown in the difficult technical processes of glazing and coloring. The Shop was opened in an effort to find a market for the wares of the enormous number of small American producers who need encouragement. Here are pots from Greenwich House, 27 Barrow Street, and from Mrs. John Linzie of New York, a former co-worker with Mr. Greener of Boston, whose work has originality and quiet distinction of form. Also



Courtesy Manchester Hand Prints



FIG. 78, FIG. 79—HAND-BLOCKED CRETONNES FROM MANCHESTER HAND PRINTS

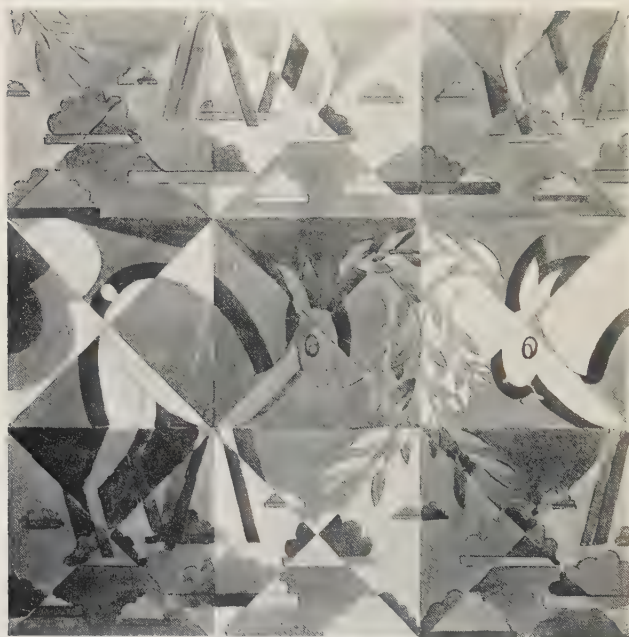


FIG. 80, FIG. 81—WALL-PAPER DESIGNS BY NINA
VASSELEVSKY

there are works by C. P. Freigang, Prof. Charles Bruins, head of the New York School of Ceramic Art, George Fredrick of Trenton, New Jersey, and above all H. Varnum Poor. Mr. Poor's pottery is the most modern in spirit of all and his plates and bowls show an amazing fertility of design, recalling the painter Cézanne. His process is known as the underglaze decoration, and while simple, requires skill in the manipulation which had ruled it out of modern industrial practice. It consists of decoration applied in metallic oxides (which take color when fused) to a white clay slip over the coarse pottery body, the old Persian method. It is interesting to hear what Mr. Poor says about modern art. "I believe that the natural development of modern art lies in a closer application of things more related to everyday usage. In this direction the artist escapes the devitalizing isolation of the studio and finds in the appropriate materials those inherent limitations and demands which give a sense of necessity and fitness to the completed form." It is the old canon, form, function, fitness, beauty, or, if you will, "*le bel outillage*." Mr. Poor's pottery is also to be seen at the Montross Gallery, 26 East Fifty-sixth Street, through whose courtesy the accompanying illustrations were made, Figs. 84 and 85.

Hunt Diedrich, another artist with whom we have already become familiar, has turned to the joys of pottery making. There are to be seen at the Ferargil Galleries, on Fifty-seventh Street, a number of plates and

bowls decorated with the vigorous angular animals we have seen before, having an archaic swiftness about them, Figs. 82 and 83. The process is, I believe, one Mr. Diedrich picked up in North Africa, a very simple low fired glaze. The two photographs were obtained through the kindness of the Ferargil Gallery.

Mention must also be made of the Ceramic Society and Design Guild, whose headquarters are at the studio of Mrs. Hatfield at 139 MacDougall Street, New York City. It is an amateur society run by women and at their yearly exhibit much of interest was to be observed, including batiks and fabrics as well as pottery.

In the following chapter an account will be given of the recent important exhibition of the Art in Trades Club, and of some of the men who are doing furniture and metal work.

CHAPTER X

Modern American Decorators and Craftsmen—II

BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 28 AND LASTING UNTIL October 27, 1926, the Art in Trades Club held at the Hotel Waldorf-Astoria their fifth annual exhibition of interior decorative art. For the first time two modernist ensembles were displayed to the American public as the work of American designers and craftsmen. This does not mean modernist work, such as one occasionally sees elsewhere produced by individual craftsmen working alone, but furnishings, hangings, metal work, all turned out by American industrial organizations.

This exhibition has in a sense summed up our entire decorative art situation from the modern point of view. Side by side with the usual examples of period furniture turned out by Messrs. W. & J. Sloane were equally beautiful creations, also theirs, done in a manner entirely modern and patterned after the best French work of today, such as Sué and Mare and Maurice Dufrêne turn out. This shows that when called upon there are American designers acquainted with the modernist style and American technical methods capable of competing with any to be found.

The existence of these two ensembles was largely due to the influence of Professor Richards, already men-

tioned, who appealed to Cheney Brothers and W. & J. Sloane in the cause of modernism.

As well as these ensembles there were to be found mingled with period work and transitional work some very beautiful single pieces such as tables, mirrors and particularly lighting fixtures, designed by our own craftsmen in the new manner.

The following is quoted from a bulletin issued by the Art in Trades Club, "The ambition and purpose of the Club go even beyond this point. It hopes, each year, to include in its exhibitions at least a few examples of forward-looking designs that will not be wholly expressions of the past but which will be serious and well-considered efforts to develop a quality of decoration that will be better suited to the requirements, both practical and esthetic, of the American home. In the present exhibition will be found rooms that represent this effort."

The first of these rooms was a modern bedroom, No. 15, designed and executed by Paul Zimmermann of New York. He found his inspiration for the room in a flower garden and the spirit of youth. The original sketch for this design was submitted to the jury of the Art in Trades Club competition held in 1925, which ended in all the competitors being ruled *hors concours*. Mr. Zimmermann's room, however, came the nearest to the coveted goal and he was allowed to carry out and display his conception at this year's exhibition. The ensemble was not, however, achieved without the col-

laboration of the Bigelow-Hartford Company, makers of the beautiful powder-blue broadloom carpet which covered the entire floor. The H. B. Lehman-Connor Company of New York contributed a handsome rose and gold bedspread of pieced taffeta, as well as the side drops of the bed, made of a Roman striped fabric, mitered at the corners to make a continuous stripe. These drops were hung on the sides from the headboard to the foot, continuing as a ruffle along the foot of the bed. Modeling, such as the low-relief entablatures depicting youthful figures in rhythmic line of gold and silver, were executed by Jean Juske of New York. The entire wall was covered with an opalescent, high-glossed, strié wall paper turned out by the W. H. S. Lloyd Company. The wood trims, two and one-half inches wide, were treated as a reeded molding with alternating silver and gold reeds. Where the molding met at the corners came a two-inch square tie block in silver leaf, not unlike, though less broad than, the door trims to be found in the houses of this country dating from the Greek revival. This molding framing the windows and doors was also carried around the room as a cornice. The illustration, Fig. 92, shows the arched mirror dressing recess at the right of the entrance. In this recess were two cabinets of a form suggested by the façade of a setback skyscraper. The use of this form in this position is perfectly justified both from the point of view of its usefulness in providing shelves and its harmonious incorporation in the whole design. They rise

two feet from the floor, set back six inches, rise again eighteen inches, set back six and once more rise to a final height of forty-five inches. The box at the top contains a secret drawer. The doors of these cabinets open on the room side disclosing spacious shelved compartments. The entire piece is enameled in bright rose with high gloss and at the edges is outlined with a reed molding smaller than, but resembling, that used in the cornice and door trim.

The lamps which stood on these cabinets were most interesting, consisting of three concave sections of green and yellow taffeta outlined in rose. The adequacy of their position is perhaps somewhat in doubt. In front of all this stood a small seat of so-called Roman design. Its curve echoed the semicircular top of the niche reversed. Its arms, which were level with the first setback in the wooden part, were enameled in gray and rose with gold and silver carvings. The curved seat was made of striped velvet in the predominant colors of the room. In front of the mirror between the cabinets stood a cushioned foot rest in two steps, the rises being alternately mauve and green and the tops gray and blue.

Near the windows were two tall floor lamps with standards in green and gold enamel, bearing shades of shirred green chiffon over yellow. The shades were trimmed in yellow, mauve and flesh tones.

The second room, No. 19, was also a bedroom. This room and the furniture therein were designed and exe-

cuted by Messrs. W. & J. Sloane while the fabrics were by Cheney Brothers. The walls of the room were covered with an oil blend in soft pastel colors. In the center of the wall opposite the entrance stood the bed made of Emboyna wood, inlaid with other rare woods, and picked out with ivory. The bed stood upon a low platform and had no footboard showing above the mattress. It was covered with a beautiful black satin spread bearing a medallion in white satin appliqué resembling in design the ancient Assyrian tree of life. Behind the bed hung a superb damask curtain of full-toned red, green and yellow in a peacock design and thoroughly modern. Facing each other on opposite walls of the room were a dressing table and commode, also made from Emboyna wood, decorated with landscape marquetry in rare woods and picked out in ivory. The drawer pulls, hinges and feet of these pieces were also made of ivory, which has come to be used by modern designers in the place of the metal hardware of other days. The legs of these two pieces as well as of the wooden chairs and night commodes, which complete the furnishings of the room, were joined to the upper part as prolonged external corner buttresses rounded off where they meet the top.

The treatment of the windows was typically modern. Next to the glass hung curtains of a sheer white gauze-like fabric containing groups of fine corded stripes and draped in a double overlay fan pattern. The outside draperies were again a Cheney damask, this time in red

and gold, the design being based on the fountain motif familiar to those acquainted with the work of Lalique and Edgar Brandt. An easy chair was the only piece of upholstered furniture in the room. It was covered with red-violet satin decorated with a white flower design in the central panel of its five-faceted back. There were two mirrors in the room, that above the dressing table being hung, as is usual in modern work, with silk cords terminating in tassels. It was oblong, with floral decorations at the top. The other mirror above the commode was oval with a narrow Emboyna frame, and carved flower motif at the top, hung with black silk cord and tassels. The central light of the room was concealed by an over-sized silk shade attached to the ceiling, and covered with silk gauze in gold tones similar to the chair and bench covering. The rug was of plain seamless chenille in deep raisin color.

While at every point the design of the ensemble of this room differs from anything heretofore seen in this country, yet there is nothing startling about it. The note is one of quiet richness, of simplicity with elegance, not unlike a Georgian room. One feels all of tradition behind the design of the furniture, all of the experience in technique, the skill of craft, that have gone before. On first entering, one might look about without detecting what had been changed.

Room No. 1, the Twentieth Century Gallery, constituted one of the most interesting efforts in the entire exhibition. Since it was the largest room and given the

place of greatest importance, it may be seen that at last the twentieth century is looking up. This room differed from the two already described in that it did not represent what is called an ensemble, that is an effect as a whole, in which certain often-repeated motifs, materials and colors predominate. This room was arranged under the direction of Wilson Hungate of the firm of Schmeig, Hungate and Kotzian of New York and showed a collection of modern American furniture and decoration skillfully brought together and combining a great variety of design and material. The purely American note which predominated, one which could not be shared by any other country, was the insistence on aboriginal American material for the largest part of the design motifs. It is interesting that first efforts to develop a modern style of our own, departing from the familiar past, should take this direction, while in other countries inspiration has been found more in logic than in history. This is curiously in contrast to the essential rationality of our modern architecture.

The first object to strike the eye on entering the room was an enormous mantelpiece of wood flanking a stone fireplace of traditional shape. One peered hard at this to discover wherein it differed from a possible Jacobean prototype and discovered that the uprights flanking the opening, instead of using classical motifs, were derived from red Indians. Also around the architrave of the grated opening to the room were conventionalized motifs of corn, tobacco, and wild animals in-

digenous to America. The corbels supporting the ceiling showed carved heads of Indians and buccaneers instead of conventional acanthus leaves. All of this carving was executed by Adam Dabrowski of Brooklyn. The most beautiful feature of the room was an enormous tapestry, nine feet eight inches by eight feet four inches, after the designs of Lorentz Kleiser of New York, executed by the Edgewater Tapestry Looms of New Jersey. The subject of the panel showed a bird's-eye view of the town of Newark as it appeared in 1820. This was surrounded by border panels containing the shields of the State of New Jersey and the City of Newark. One saw also the life of the Hackensack Indian according to careful studies made at the Museum of the American Indian of New York City. Part of the tapestry was based on an old piece woven by an Indian.

The wood of which this room was largely fashioned is a South American product known as Cordia wood. Beneath the tapestry stood a deep drawer table, six feet long, and of Indian design, made of Cordia wood. The stretchers were of Slavonian oak decorated with floral marquetry inserts made of different colored woods, such as hairwood, rosewood, camina, palm tree, grenadia, snakewood, cocobola, vermilion, applewood, and kingwood. The top was of Australian black bean with the edge of Cordia wood.

At the right of the mantel stood a large sofa constructed of Emboyna wood much enriched with floral treatment and covered with a rough-textured antique

satin made of duppione silk. This without further detail gives one the keynote of the furniture, dark and pleasing in color and made of many rare woods. Of the fabrics, all of which were submitted by F. Schumacher and Company, the most beautiful was the silk damask window hanging of modern pattern. Below and to right and left of the tapestry panel were two small wall brackets of hand-forged silver, copper and iron showing a savage killing a deer. On the opposite wall were a pair similarly designed from the masks of Indian tribes. These really beautiful pieces illustrate the growing skill of our metal workers and the tendency to use with beautiful effect two or more metals in conjunction. These brackets were the work of the Edward F. Caldwell Co., Inc., of New York.

The contents of this room, American in inspiration, design and manufacture, borrow nothing from foreign sources. And while it does not stand for the arrival of a new style, it, however, shows imagination and the tremendous increase in technical skill which we have achieved in twenty years.

The entrance hall, No. 3 in the catalogue, displayed the skill of Oscar Bach, designer and worker in metals, who received the gold medal of honor given in 1926 by the New York Architectural League for native craftsmanship. The most beautiful pieces were the large double doors, depicting the arts and crafts, made for the Toledo Museum of Art. The door at the right had pierced medallions of repoussé silver and bronze show-

ing low relief figures representing glass blowing, forging, cabinet making, etc., while on the left were depicted sculpture, ceramic painting, printing, pottery and jewel making.

There were also two remarkably handsome torchères with shafts of snakewood and tops of steel embellished with copper and brass studs, and crested with bronze, steel and copper inlay of leaf pattern.

In room No. 4, an entrance hall, stood two fine torchères executed by Walter Kantack of Kantack and Company, Inc., New York.

Room No. 8, a great living hall, also contained beautiful examples of the superb craftsmanship of Mr. Kantack. These were found in a group consisting of a console table with mirror above, and a hammered brass flower holder standing upon the table. The table of brightly polished iron was supported on four legs, two against the wall and two at the corners of the half-hexagonal top. These legs were made in the shape of long stiff scrolls drawn in at the base to rest upon a narrow plinth. The mirror was vertical in proportion with a hexagonal head to match the table, crowned with a small ornament resembling the fountain motif. The frame of the mirror was of polished iron with a double rail at the bottom. The design of this group was distinctly French in spirit and of a chaste refinement distinguishing it from all else in the exhibit. The group stood between two deep embrasured windows containing iron grills of novel design, also by Mr. Kantack.

These grills were made of slender iron bars which radiated toward the top of the window from a narrow base where they drew together in a flat crown-like motif. Other graceful scrolls emanated from this point toward the jambs of the window.

A sun room, No. 16, shown by the Sons-Cunningham Reed and Rattan Company of New York, displayed interesting modern departures in summer furniture. The most significant piece was a large davenport of wicker with upholstered seat and back, the seat being but eight inches from the ground. The loose cushions and back pillows of the piece were covered with a multicolored Roman striped fabric, the seat very deep so that it would be impossible for one to sit in anything but an easy reclining posture. This is indicative of the tendency to make our informal furniture, and even some of the formal, yield to the demands for comfort made by supple young bodies in search of repose after exercise. The appearance of the piece suggests the new era as does a chair of corresponding design, the companion piece to the davenport.

This exhibition constituted America's first effort to show modern ensembles. Those who rallied to the entreaties of Professor Richards will go down in history as our pioneers, but they will not have to suffer as did "les Cinq," twenty-five years ago.

It remains to give some account of our metal-workers. Ferrobrandt seems the outstanding factor in

this field, probably because of the guarantee of Edgar Brandt's firmly established reputation. We have few native designers to compete with this organization.

The career of Walter Kantack, of Kantack and Co., is interesting in its development. In founding this firm several years ago, he began by following classical models in his designing of special objects but was driven even then to originality through lack of money wherewith to purchase antique works to copy. His weapons were pencil, paper and drawing-board. He never intended an industrialized quantity output. In 1925 Mr. Kantack, at the instigation of Professor Richards, was sent as a member of the delegation of industrialists from this country who visited the Paris Exposition. The majority of this commission seem to have been unmoved by what they saw, but Kantack returned convinced that "forms of beauty are unlimited . . . that there is no need of discarding the old, and still less need of discarding and refusing the new . . . that the two can affiliate and melt into each other." So now Mr. Kantack works, slipping in a modern touch whenever and wherever he may. He works mainly for architects, doing a great deal for Buchman and Kahn. He has no idea that modern art is a fad but believes in it.

Mr. Kantack states that the West is leading the way in matters of modernism in art. One sees it everywhere there, in shop windows, architecture and homes. There is a big market for hardy pioneers in the West.

Oscar Bach, whose work we have already encountered in the Art in Trades Club exhibition, has for more than ten years been furnishing architects with wrought-iron doors, grills and the like, always with a new and modern touch. He was last year awarded the prize for excellence in craftsmanship at the annual Exhibition of the Architectural League. He now operates two plants, the Bach Studios and the Seeger Studios where his designs are put into metal.

Other men in this field whose work is strongly influenced by the modern spirit are B. J. Hasselman of New York, Gaston Lachaise and William Zorach, who is an all-around artist in any medium, but whose being an individual working alone makes him fall without the premise of this book. Both Mr. Zorach and his wife are thorough modernists and well known as painters and sculptors. There is also Mr. Zimmermann of the "Iron Craftsmen" of Philadelphia, who makes grills and doors for H. T. Lindeberg, New York architect. Hunt Diedrich's wrought-iron weather vanes and signs are familiar and he must be included as a modernist.

Coming to the industrial output of modern pottery and china in this country today, there is none. All the modern objects we see on sale are imported. The Lenox China Co., of Trenton, New Jersey, puts out a few simple patterns somewhat different from those seen in the past, but lacking any positive modernist character. The same may be said of the Onondaga Co. at Syracuse, New York, but that is to say little, from our

point of view. It is only among individual workers like H. Varnum Poor that the new touch is showing.

The best places in New York City to buy books on modern art are, after the art department of Brentano's (particularly good for French work), the Weyhe Gallery on Lexington Avenue, the very interesting shop of H. C. Perlberg at 14 East Thirty-seventh Street, where the latest books from Austria, Germany and Russia are to be seen and where one may linger to discuss and browse, and the equally well-stocked shop of F. K. Ferenz, 15 West Forty-fifth Street, where together with books on industrial art from all lands, one finds a few tempting examples of Viennese arts and crafts, some hand-painted cubist lamp shades and other small objects. In the near future Mr. Ferenz expects to design and put out furniture and textiles of his own manufacture.



FIG. 82, FIG. 83—GLAZED POTTERY PLATES

By Hunt Diedrich

Courtesy of the Dudensing Galleries



Courtesy of the Montrose Gallery

FIG. 84, FIG. 85—POTTERY BY H. VARNUM POOR

By H. Varnum Poor

CHAPTER XI

Possibilities in Decoration

PRESUMABLY, BEFORE VERY LONG, PEOPLE ARE GOING to wake up to find themselves converted to modernism. Something will have clicked in the brain overnight, and a great desire to surround oneself with modern things in a modern way will seize one. It is a queer sensation, exciting, just like beginning to move again in a world where everything has become petrified. And what is to be done about it if the person so seized be also so situated economically as to make recourse to a professional decorator out of bounds?

The first thing to do is think. Be reasonable about it, and if you plan changes remember that a period of transition may be an extremely awkward one. A decorator would come into your home and sweep away everything. He would remove your familiar furniture, your oriental rugs, and pull the cherished portraits of your ancestors from the walls. It would be good-bye for ever to them. Then he would proceed to create something in this void.

You, however, are to be the doctor this time, and you will do well to begin by looking over a few books. As there are no examples of modern work in this coun-

try you will have to turn to European work. A German book called "1000 Ideen" will give you at least one hundred ideas and a little French book called "Pour Comprendre l'Art décoratif moderne en France" will sum up the whole situation for you from that angle. But you are not German, neither are you French, so when you have all these ideas put them in the back of your mind and return to your problem which you are going to solve creatively, not imitatively.

In the chapter on the sources of our modern artistic individuality, I have suggested as the mainspring of our esthetic sense today that beauty which lies in the automobile, the aeroplane or the motor boat. Purely mechanical objects, the completeness of their functional realization has made them beautiful to us and the feeling of beauty we experience there is our furthest step forward. One of the most exquisite things we possess today is the new type of sailing yacht one sees lying off Newport. The Marconi schooner is a creature of long clean mathematical lines, her masts hollow steel tubes wire-braced, her sails half the number carried before, simpler yet swifter. Here we have epitomized the essential thing.

But how are we going to impart this sense of clear openness, of up and outwardness, as M. Bouy says, of sure swift accuracy made beautiful by a tender edge, to our little apartment or five-room house?

If our arguments are correct, we should accomplish this without great expense, for to have it prove costly

would be unfit to our problem, and fitness must be observed.

Let us say we are moving into a new apartment of four or five rooms. We enter and observe white walls, a wooden floor and steel windows with small panes, an anomaly (for a steel sash should contain one piece of strong plate glass, not the little, once unavoidable rectangles of Georgian days). The door and window trim is white. There are outlets for lights in the center of the ceiling; in the baseboard and wall, outlets for brackets. Radiators, white painted if you are fortunate, stand under the windows. There either is or is not a fireplace.

The white plaster is an excellent start, for it may be papered, a good modern paper if you wish, or painted in fresco and papered out later if the effect be a failure. For the hallway, which is narrow, short and dark, let us choose a warm paper, something welcoming, enfolding and amusing to drive away the dreariness of a little stuffy room where one will not linger anyway. A paper with some large-scale abstract design will do nicely. Let the floor go or carpet it, if you can, a deep gray-purple. The ceiling stays white and about the overhead light you suspend a skirt made of thin brightly batiked silk and drawn together at the bottom, giving a ruffle, the edge of which you may bind with twisted red and yellow silk cord.

In the living room we have two windows giving sunlight. A black floor is most to be desired if you are going to use color. You already have furniture, colonial

pattern, some chairs and a couple of tables, an upholstered sofa and a cabinet with wood doors. Permit your walls to remain white, or paper them white and turn your attention to the ceiling. Buy some gold paper and paper it yourself. Paste it on any way, in large or small pieces, so that the interesting unevenness shows, but trim it at the juncture with the walls and paint a black border around it, on the paper not on the wall, making it wavy to do away with a little stiffness. Cut out a few stars of different sizes from deep blue paper and paste them on the gold here and there, not more than ten or a dozen. Paint the door and window trim canary-yellow, with cerise on the edge. If you want to amuse yourself, do a bit of painting on the plaster about the doors, some silhouetted design like a border in deep slate-blue. Paint a bowl of fruit, in flat colors, resting on the top of the trim, the more uneven the better, but always in bold colors.

Remove the shades from your windows and introduce white sash curtains. Hang, inside these, draw curtains in two tiers of the most fascinating cretonne you can find, making the cords and tassels very nice. Reupholster your sofa in a deep indigo denim and do not clutter it with too many cushions, which are always either in sloppy dented disarray or too sleekly piled. If your tables and cabinet have nice wooden tops do not cover them. Do not litter the tops of things with bric-a-brac. Place a few pieces of modern porcelain alone where their essential shape may count; a beautiful



FIG. 86, FIG. 87—ROOMS BY BERNIARD



FIG. 88—METAL MIRROR AND CONSOLE TABLE

By Kantack and Company, Inc.

yellow cooking bowl or a tall black wine bottle will do—the same homely fundamental idea as the gilded bricks and cattails in sewer pipes of yesterday, only better. Find wonderfully shaped modern objects for ornament, propellers, shiny new tools like a geologist's hammer or chemist's porcelain mixing bowls. Old helmets have wonderful form when seen alone, wonderful because their very serviceability gave them that form. Models of airplanes and motor boats are as beautiful as the ubiquitous models of full rigged ships now in vogue, whose hypothetical skippers have returned to mold.

Your furniture against this setting should not lose its value. Upon the walls place, if you can afford them, some real modernist paintings; there are lots to be had cheap; and if not, some wood blocks or monotypes, always modern, or some good reproductions in color of Cézanne, Derain or Picasso or the like, frames to be of natural wood and no mat. If you will place in your simple wall brackets milky ground-glass bulbs, you may trace upon them with colored inks the loveliest spirals, stars, etc., and have no shade. For your overhead lights buy one of the extremely intelligent sort of fixture which throws light up on your starred gold ceiling and reflects it into the room. They have a good shape just as they are made. Do not touch the radiator. To conceal it lessens its efficiency. Keep it clean and white. Some day there will be really handsome radiators. So much for an interior where you have almost *carte blanche* to start with.

It is harder if we wish to introduce a few modern touches into a midst we must guard. It is absurd to be giving any rules for capturing so elusive a thing as the aspect of the modern spirit which has not even been conclusively demonstrated. However, if it does exist we know its slogan. It is openness, clearness, simplicity, color. One thing it is not and that is fussy. Fussiness is never good, but certain of the styles now enjoying a vain repetition seem to depend upon an elaborate fussiness. A clutter is not tolerable to the modern spirit, when things are confused enough as it is, and we must have few objects. Rigid formality is equally to be guarded against since we must be free, elusive.

It would be well to begin by eliminating from your room such decorative elements as depend too heavily upon sentiment for their appeal, unless of course they happen to have at the same time distinguished shapes or really fine color. Eliminate ruthlessly until you have sifted things down to a little category of objects which belong together because they are impersonal in their direct appeal to your sense of proportion, form and color. You will then have a handful of what-nots, and will be in a position to cock your eye at your room and try to imagine it as an ensemble. And to be very clear in this it must be understood that ensemble means whole, like the cosmos as opposed to chaos, and that in rearranging your room you are definitely trying, by elimination and coördination, to achieve a milieu which shall be one thing in the end. Not stiff and formal, but

like today, like yourself. It should be related throughout in integrity of proportion and color.

Two things must be preserved, the proportions of the room and the true functions of the parts of the room. Do not break up the shapes of wall areas but seek to express their proportion by the choice and spacing of what you place against them. If, for example, you have a long strip of wall at one side, preserve its sense of stretch by not piling up a too vertical composition in the center of it. Maintain a rhythmic spacing and do not interfere with the workings of doors or radiators, conceal nothing, be perfectly frank. Mirrors are beautiful things and make space, in fact the more good glass you have, the better.

Now the chances are that the color scheme of your recent room was nil, also that when you have stripped it bare of non-essentials and jumbled up what is left, you will perceive that a certain trend of color in the whole is noticeable. Isolate the germ of this and base your new scheme upon it. You must study until you determine this. There are twenty million mechanical ways of determining a color scheme, but we rely too heavily on these. Your own taste, good or bad, is better; only be as bold and as gay as you dare. If you decide on red, green and purple, go to it, but be honest about it and keep those colors. Other colors you may add in small ways to soften the edge of things. Perhaps you may re-paper or paint your walls and paint your floor (a deep color), but at least you can have new curtains. White

and black are wonderful foils to bright color. Windows are for our purposes more to admit light than be looked through, and the upper part of the window admits the best light. Do away with window shades and have some sort of curtain instead. But beware confusion. Nice bright sash curtains on metal rods at the top of each sash can be made of Cheney or Mallinson silks. Don't make your windows fussy or stuffy. Perhaps you will leave them just as they are except for a veil over the lower sash if you wish privacy, and at night fold them away behind long drapes of something that will transform the room.

If you have a mantel, place almost nothing upon it. One finely shaped piece in the center against a background which you may carry to the ceiling as a dark panel is good. This gives a fine vertical swoop up and invites your eye to realize to the full the plastic loveliness of whatever you may have placed on the mantel. You will perhaps hang almost nothing on your walls. Remember the average picture is a curiously inconsistent thing. Confine yourself to very decorative things with pronounced pattern and color. A few ornaments placed sparingly, where they may count, on bookcase or cabinet, will do. The edges of bookshelves painted in clear colors look well.

Personally, I prefer lampshades which appear as interestingly shaped patches of ivory yellow light. They may be interestingly shaped, but when too covered with decorations become restless, and obscure the function

of the light. A lamp which sheds its clear light upon other colored objects is better. Remember the already mentioned beauty of clearly shaped utilitarian objects.

By now your old things in a new way will look different to you. Try the experiment and let your fondness for things as they are become a passion. A few hundred people beginning to arrange in the modern fashion will start the rehabilitation of our industrial output. If you are buying, ask to see modern American things, and when you are shown, as you probably will be, the same old things with the paint still fresh on them, say you will go where you can buy imported modern things.

A more difficult problem comes when we consider the building of a whole new house. Here we immediately encounter structural issues of somewhat revolutionary nature. We must think carefully, never too far, and proceed with much circumspection. Let us pick a house in the country for discussion.

What the honest home seeker of today most prizes is "ye olde time charme," the long, low, rambling structure of earthy stone walls, small-paned windows and ample chimneys from which spirals of blue smoke lift in the still Autumn air. But somehow this is not the sort of building we should look for today. Stone will always be good material for walls, but we may use something else.

For an architect to propose to his client, eager for a charming home in the country, such an uncompromising steel-shod, glass-filled cement box as it would be

possible to construct, if made in the most modern way and of the most modern materials, would be to him equal to suggesting he live in a factory. It would not succeed. And yet it is not at all illogical to imagine a modern country house built of steel and concrete and sheets of glass. It gives one a chilly feeling, the antithesis of cozy. Yet is ours a cozy age?

Among the French architects who have been experimenting in building houses of our modern materials are Le Corbusier, André Lurcat, Mallet Stevens, W. R. Fuerst, and Pierre Chareau. Their idea has been to build in rectangular forms, without pitched roofs and showing frankly the steel structure, houses which are externally an honest expression of internal function. This means they have concentrated on two things, a good plan, come what will, and the unequivocal use of modern structural methods. The result is often of queer external appearance, for if a certain room, from the inside point of view, demands queerly proportioned windows, it gets them, and there they are, poked through the wall, showing externally in a very hit-or-miss way.

One thing more, however, is needed to supplement this frankness; a relation of the plan and elevation in such a way as to make the sacrifices not entirely from one side. Experience has shown it to be unnecessary.

Mallet Stevens defines architecture as "sculpture on an enormous scale." Of course that is what it is, but every time there comes a shake-up it is not so easy to readjust things on this basis.

Undoubtedly we shall come more and more to use the new materials for all purposes, homes as well as power plants. More and more we are accustoming ourselves to the presence of steel and our distaste for domesticating it is on the wane. M. Bouy has said, "It is possible to use iron for everything," and in following with the eye the exquisite curves of the legs of one of his tables, one forgets its cold metallic nature in the delight of refinement. In the end we will be living with steel and concrete. We will no longer be afraid of its stiffness and chill, nor pine for the days of elaborately trumped-up charm. Charm is a poor guide and a conscious attempt to create beauty in architecture before the primary aspects of a problem are met is false. If that be so, how are we to escape adapting our houses to the best ways of using modern construction? Beauty has always come from honesty and it must again do so.

Granted we have grown accustomed to the idea of steel or reënforced concrete for our home, it will not look like a brick Colonial house nor an Elizabethan manor. We hardly know what it will look like, at least a consummate form has not yet to my knowledge been hit upon. Houses will be higher, it is in the nature of steel to soar, and economically sound to let it do so. Roofs will be flat, they are cheaper to build so, afford terraces for summer nights, and can be strong enough to sustain any weight of snow. When a beam twenty feet long may be made strong enough to support several stories of wall above, it becomes possible to have un-

broken sheets of glass instead of individual windows. This is a great point, for any one knows the value of one source of light in a room. And as for air, all the air in the world may come in. These windows too might as well be made like automobile windows, of a sheet of plate glass neatly sliding in a socket. One begins to visualize a bit the aspect of such a house. It is not so bad. It should be simple to build, fireproof and somehow very satisfying.

If steel shows on the exterior, it will be in a perfectly structural pattern. Why not then pick it out in color or decorate it? In between are surfaces of concrete or stucco to be treated in color. A house painted in pale horizontal bands of spectrum colors, commencing at the ground with deeper violet and blue and running, as the wall rises, through tints of green, yellow, orange and red, the top of the highest tower a rosy pink against the blue sky—this is not bizarre; it is too simple and straightforward. One portion of the house, being higher than another, will give on to the roof of the latter, affording a pleasant terrace. A fountain may play in its center, even with a boudoir just below it, and gay awnings shade it from the sun. You cannot do these things with wood and stone, despite their charm.

They have even made the attempt, these Frenchmen, to alter the familiar functions of rooms to more nearly convene to the needs of modern life. Indoors we tread upon floors made of non-conducting composition in pleasant colors. These compositions are a species of ce-

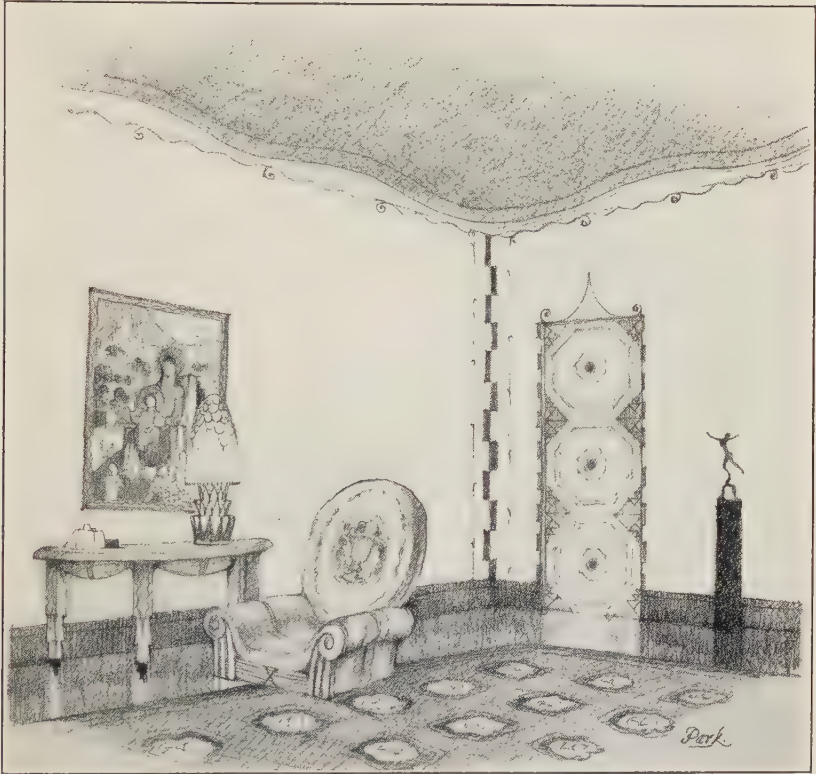


FIG. 89—DESIGN FOR A ROOM

Sketch by the Author

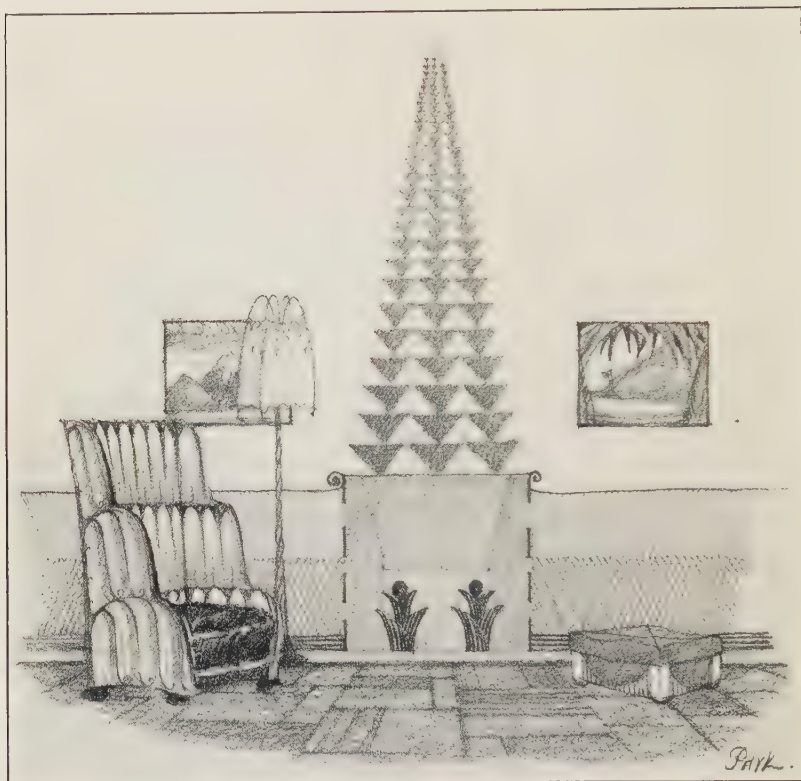


FIG. 90—DESIGN FOR A ROOM

Sketch by the Author

ment, laid over the rough floor, fireproof and non-breakable as well as capable of acquiring a fine finish. In one house, for example, the architect argues "man is an individualist." This is the house of a brain worker and on the ground floor he has two main rooms, one for meditation, and one for the material life. There is also a kitchen. Upstairs are bed chambers. It is a queer, impersonal, analytical sort of dwelling, as little like the feasting hall of a Saxon thane as can be. Yet many a client will approach his architect with the latter as his ideal.

It is possible to reapportion the functions of a house in more ways than one. A room which is to be a lounging and reading room may be made a better one if it be studied essentially as such from the start. Architects do not do this enough today. Here the idea of the "ensemble" comes in. Perhaps this room will be laid out with a certain size of wall divan as a unit, this divan designed together with a bookshelf and lights, repeated about the room. Dining rooms are a waste of space when economy is in demand, for, save during two or three meals each day or for parties, they lie idle. Some type of built-in, expandable dining outfit is less consuming of space and may be at one end of a room useful for other purposes all day. Surely today, with costs as they are, it is silly to lay out a house in such a way as to tie up certain rooms by allocating to them some special function. Formality is on the wane and relatively few people any longer strive to maintain the dignified

functions belonging to an age forced to amuse itself by observing amenities.

Two factors which daily gain in importance influence our domesticity, the increase in athletics and the worship of hygiene. As a background for the younger generation, that phalanx of youth which is having things so much its way, loosely dressed, uncorseted, rubber shod, lolling and dancing, the room of the past is somehow inadequate. It is too cluttered with objects, there is not enough freedom about it and for the supple relaxed body stiff furniture is torture. Deep low upholstered armchairs, lounges, low tables and stools are the thing. Like the little oriental, we are again returning toward the floor, whence we came, for our comfort. The stiffer the age, the more glacially have we propped ourselves up from mother earth; as we become natural and less constrained, we let down a bit. What a ridiculous object is a chair, anyhow! A queer machine, it is constructed to fit the human body in a most undignified attitude. Of all the codes of form ever evolved for the conduct of human beings, our particular European variety has been the stiffest, the least natural. With all his refinement of etiquette, the Japanese has retained the art of natural grace. In dress and furniture the beautiful simplicity of his taste is the antithesis of our elaborate and artificial bent. But we are getting over that now, actually for the first time in centuries sensing the luxuries of our bodies. Athletics have come back to save us from this menace, to preserve the balance be-

tween mind and body, so long out of tune. Our houses, particularly our country houses, are beginning to be places where young people come and go between activities, where they relax for a few moments, in their flannels, or gather for the purpose of setting off together, somewhere—wherever it is we are going. The living rooms are more concourses than drawing rooms. What is a drawing room today? Chiefly we come and go and eat. Also we sleep.

We sleep and bathe very carefully. We sleep in screened sleeping porches with the light carefully regulated and electric pads to warm us of cold nights, twin beds naturally, they are more hygienic. If anything is difficult to reconcile to the design of a house in the old manner, it is a sleeping porch. They never look well. Yet every one wants them today, large ones and separate ones for every member of the family, save husband and wife, who can get along together if they have twin beds. Now in a house which would have flat roofs the most delightful sleeping loggias might be designed to open upon them and only further the design. The other factor of hygiene is the bath, of which one should exist for every one. Who is to say when the bath will really begin to emerge from its long obscurity? We are all bathing today, privately and like "a house afire," but where are the great public baths of other days? They are in the despised Orient, where bathing is still an art and a religious rite. Our modern bathroom, even the tiled paradises as big as a ball room that we see in the

later and more important sections of our magazines, are but a beginning. Soon we will all have plunges and pools. There are a great many today, and in a water-proof, fireproof house how easy this will be! It will not be difficult to support a glassed-in tank on the roof. This is more important than a reception room.

Our houses will tend to become gymnasias, the only way for a people shut up in cities or in stuffy suburbs just outside the cities, and deprived of the benefits of that hardier life just gone by, to preserve the physical stamina of the race. The gentleman of yesterday rode a horse and walked, he of today remains seated, whether in one place or going at sixty miles an hour. The reaction was inevitable and the answer to it—we must convert our homes into places of life-saving recreation. Stuffy comfort we do not need, but hygiene we do.

So were I called upon to write the program for a modern suburban home I should attempt to supply just what is so thoroughly lacking in the average example one sees, a feeling of living adequacy. Instead of following the general order of rooms—hallway, reception room, living room, dining room, sun parlor and service—I should suggest a hallway giving into a foyer or lounge (the large room). Here the family shift about and lounge for a while. Off this is a quiet room, lined with books, a library with one door. The dining room, opening out of the lounge, is small and has a table along the wall with a wall bench on one side and chairs on the other. It is arranged for self-service, rather like a lux-

urious cafeteria, with a slide from the kitchen to allow the placing of dishes upon a table. There is no sun porch, but a whole terrace somewhere higher up. Kitchen and service will remain much as before with attention given to the saving of footsteps and labor. Whether or not we morally approve of this weakening toward those who serve us, we are embarked upon such a course.

Upstairs I would have a central plunge bath with showers about it and a small gymnasium off it, sleeping loggias with dressing rooms behind them and a boudoir and terrace garden for mamma. On the roof may be a pergola, glazed or not, for meals or parties and a space to enjoy the sun or the stars.

CHAPTER XII

The Future

THE FUTURE, WHAT WILL IT BRING FORTH?

It will bring forth an art which must differ from all art in the past in the same measure that scientific industrial democracy differs from the Middle Ages.

Is there hope that this future will be a happy state, and its art a great one? Its exact condition of happiness I leave to those who enjoy estimates and comparisons, for I doubt if the dwellers in a golden age ever complained any less bitterly than do we of our present state. Yet there is hope, valiant hope, and I believe it is that note of hope in modern art which endears it to those who feel.

Future art should be great because of its almost unlimited technical facilities and available knowledge, and because of the new conditions of man's existence which have as yet been given no coherent expression. It should be great, from an appraisal of its resources, and if the human race proves itself elastic enough to cope with the overwhelming ramifications of modern life.

In this struggle it will encounter the same obstacles of human cupidity, intolerance and prejudice, but it will be armed with a bright new weapon which is an Excalibur and cuts its way through stone and steel,

disease and ignorance. The methods of science can alone arrange the disorder of industry.

Vision and patience are hard won in an age of exasperation. We are passing over the threshold of the realm of make-believe, and are alive at the time when the tide of the world has turned.

There is a gentle narcotic about prophecies. They are so easily tossed off, just as man has always evolved elaborate mechanisms for the explaining of everything, to assuage his awful thirst for believing.



It is Sunday afternoon, and for reasons of human inertia, one ceases from the pursuit of some occupation to cock an ear at humanity enjoying its day of rest. The scene is a cheap modern apartment, and rain is holding within doors the majority of people who would otherwise be outside their homes rolling about. Noises from other apartments invade one's own until there is the feeling of swarming. There is no privacy, no serenity. Several phonographs and a radio retail music in a kaleidoscopic *mêlée* of sound. A mass of Sunday newspapers, funnies uppermost, lies on the table. This is living life, this is the rich moment of leisure for which we toil, of which we dream. Is it all a blur of futility?

Where is this hope for the future? Sit down and figure it out. To begin with, there is the possibility of a much better apartment house than the one you live in, which has always impressed you as cheap and stupid.

As well as having sound-deadened walls, which are perfectly possible, there might be a much more intelligent disposition of the plan, if it were considered on its own merits, as a new type of plan, and not as a segment of old-fashioned private dwelling hoisted in the air. The long dark hall might be done away with if we made our entrance more directly into the center of things and radiated thence.

Neither has it occurred to any one that as we are arranging our masses in tall narrow strips, the logical thing in planning might be to distribute rooms in vertically planned suites. In other words, we might think in terms of tower clusters and not layers, each tower with its circular stair or elevator. There is of course only so much wall space to a mass, but following the direction of this mass in the arrangement of parts is logical, as when planning in the country we spread out, and thus take greatest advantage of the open terrains. Verticality is the unimpeded direction, and by making higher rooms we increase their volume in a most pleasant way. The influence of verticality, the "city dimension," is not yet consistently felt.

In concrete construction we may have areas of glass from floor to ceiling, if we wish, because walls between supports do not have to bear weight. The window in the corner of the room appears also to be an intelligent economy, for it utilizes for light a place useless for anything but a corner cupboard. If this window be a tall strip of glass wall, so to speak, it should be most effec-



Courtesy of the Art in Trades Club

FIG. 91—BEDROOM DESIGNED BY W. AND J. SLOANE FOR THE ART IN TRADES CLUB
EXHIBITION OF 1926



Courtesy of the Art in Trades Club

FIG. 92—BEDROOM DESIGNED BY PAUL ZIMMERMANN FOR ART IN
TRADES CLUB EXHIBITION OF 1926

tive with tall drops of soft curtain at either side. In Gothic days they did precisely what we are coming to today and had enormous windows filling in the empty space between roof supports. By keeping doors also near the corners of rooms we save wall space.

One detail to be done away with is the mock fireplace, the gas log typical of transitional misguided enthusiasm. There would be a frank acceptance of steam heat and electricity. Radiators will stand efficient and unconcealed in the rooms and they will be beautiful in design, which today they are not quite.

Possibly this will come to pass. Domestic atmosphere is a matter of tradition and habit and it changes. To the quiet clinger to Queen Anne days, a Mycenaean home would have seemed a very strange place, not at all a place in which to sit down and read a bit of Pope's Homer of an evening. Yet the Mycenaean house was a very well-planned affair, with stairways and all, and the Mycenaean himself a strict spiritual ancestor of the Queen Anne man on his classic mother's side. "Ça passe," as M. Coué would have said.

The problem will adjust itself from within, slowly and only so. No forced or eccentric sudden departure from tradition will for long endure. If we begin by copying French or German work, we will only end by producing something quite different. And as the moment approaches when the field will be thrown wide open, when the first wave of modern decoration will sweep over us, we must expect to see and hear many

strange things. Individualistic tendencies in the work of different designers will foster contending claims to correctness. Elaborate efforts to be original will obscure the quieter game being played beneath the surface, where people of refinement and culture of the old order are feeling the stimulus and entering a transitional phase consonant with the development of modern thought of which they become increasingly aware. An age of literature is at hand which must, to any open mind, throw the world into new perspective. Such books as have recently come forth, analyzing the mechanisms of human character and chronicling the romance of science, must necessarily make one restless to push on to a more consistent ordering of our entourage. We feel the need of equalizing the pressure of existence in this harrowing midst by an adjustment of our tempo of living. For we little realize the influence surroundings exert upon us and vice versa our influence upon our surroundings. Eccentric gentlemen who have quarreled with society usually voice their protest in eccentric garb. Our furnishings, our homes, are little more than garb, in a wider sense. If we project the futile game of disallowing the evidence of our senses and refusing to be up to date, we differ from the majority in respect to actual living. And if we lead thoroughly modern existences, yet continue to surround ourselves with new reproductions of old things, we are ignoring an inconsistency.

Only now are the mists commencing to lift from a semi-medieval state. Only slowly are superstition and

cults beginning to pale before pressure of clear thought. Thought is stripping the eternal unknowable of all save its mystery.

We know more and more of the vast orbits of space, the life of protoplasms, and from this knowledge we may judge that certain things once believed in are not so. But what to put in the stead of dead beliefs we do not know. Of the God mystery, we understand not one atom more. So the inscrutability of life not only deepens, but becomes a clear issue and for that reason perhaps less hard to endure. Divested one day of the shrouds of built-up conjecture, we shall be happier than the superstitious people of the Middle Ages in proportion as they were happier than the taboo-thwarted natives of the Solomon Islands.

In partaking of the beauty of science, future art, which is architecture and all the crafts as well as painting, sculpture and literature, will show this disengagement of conjectural from rational thought. As an illustration take Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment" as typical of the former mood. Then place beside it a synthesis of form, color and surface by Cézanne, and the transference of human interest from accepting to inquiring is manifest. In art, the Middle Ages were the time of mystery and faith, the Renaissance, the period of destructive skepticism, and today the day of fact induced from methodical inquiry.

We are still copying architecture and furniture of the middle period and even of the first. Painting has

gone on ahead. Will not our architecture and decoration eventually betray this same influence, reflect the same feeling for life?

It is balance and simplification we are seeking in life and which must show itself. This does not imply monstrous extension in one direction alone, as if we were to run all to height like the imaginary projects for the future aspect of New York City. It means a more rounded fulfillment of possibility.

Dark clouds of intolerance and political upheaval as usual threaten the peaceful working out of what is so easily envisaged.

But were we tomorrow plunged in revolution, it would perhaps affect but little the development of art. It might even evoke some tremendous expression as when Athens emerged triumphant from almost certain doom at the hands of the Persians, to build the Parthenon. It would destroy for a time the unreality of much of our lives in bringing us face to face with eternity.

But art has a method of picking its path down the centuries influenced by, yet aloof from, turmoil. At one time it retreats to the monasteries for shelter, and at another takes its way apparently oblivious to the distressing ructions of Guelph and Ghibelline. Read Machiavelli's history of Florence and try to picture that day as an age of glorious and delicate art. The creative spirit obeys no rules. The aspect of art is the aspect of the spiritual development of a people, which is a non-materialistic consideration. Golden ages of art have fol-

lowed eras of conquest and expansion as well as paralleled them.

What may change the world more than a revolution is the very great possibility of not one but scores of revolutionary discoveries. The automobile has contributed more to art than all the museums in the United States. Were the means discovered whereby the atom might be forced to yield up its energy, the world would enter upon a new phase, if indeed all the atoms in creation did not explode spontaneously with the breaking down of one. The navigation of space may permit us to rise in the air and remain until the revolution of the earth has placed below us that spot we wish to visit, whereupon we will descend. And so on.

And the accomplishment of each one of these things would be by the slow precise unerring method of science, which has no a priori concepts. More and more we shall come to use industrially manufactured objects instead of handmade. As the process of manufacture conforms more and more to the nature of the machine and to the means by which a process, as, for example, in the stamping of textiles, may induce a decoration of its own, we will emerge with what we want. We wanted machines to help us, now we only ask what they will give us best. They refuse what we should like, which would be to get Chippendale chairs by turning a crank!

Still, it lies within the power of these machines, when human beings shall so manipulate them, to find the way. Machines must in the end prove an economy, else of

what use are they? There will come an era when to the perfected machine, efficient and easily operated, man will begin the application of skill. The number of artists will increase as the number of mechanics decrease. From intelligent application will come a satisfying product.

People would not lament the past to the extent they do if their cash expenditures brought more of real value in modern materials. Our money seems ground up in the cogwheels of these greedy omnivorous machines which turn us out too often a piece of junk. In the manufacture of modern furniture, when one has taken in the outward aspect of a table or bureau, closer scrutiny reveals a rawness, an underdone newness of the whole fabric. There was not time to decently season the wood, to begin with, and things are warping and coming unglued. It is done on one side only, for the rear looks like a packing case. The drawers stick. This is the sort of thing the moderate purse can afford, the joyless outfit of most brides and grooms, to be paid for in some elaborate financial transaction. Better grades of product can be had for more money, in fact a great deal of furniture produced today is technically of a high enough standard to satisfy the most exacting. But the period pieces demand hand carving. This alone adds to the expense. It is so costly as to be a luxury afforded by the few, and that is not a natural logical footing for the situation. Unless the machines, in producing much for the many, can also make it *cheap* and *good*, they will

not in the end be of any real service to us, for by their product they must be judged.

To raise the standard of excellence and lower the cost of a product is to relieve the pressure at both ends, for bad workmanship means abuse of process somewhere along the line, and extravagant cost means limited sales. It means the application of more intelligence and also time. In the end, the simple objects of which the machine is capable without false effort, which must resemble the work of machines and not the craft of yesterday, should cost what the people of the machine age can normally afford.

I can guess at sweeping changes in education and particularly in the education of the very young with respect to beauty. We have now our wholesale institutions for educating and next comes a careful study of what is what in the actual matter of education. Undoubtedly we shall give up trying to educate masses of individuals by introducing them merely to the past, to the museums of the categories, and instead teach them directly to reason, arm them not with a useless load but with a keen-edged weapon. If with art this be done, who shall say but that we may not all turn out artists?

Perfect corollary to the inductive principle, we are told that if we desire a thing we must not hamper ourselves in pursuit of it by an attitude of mind which would stamp our will upon the will of nature. Success won in this way is too often at the expense of the ability to enjoy it. It is not a work of art but a rape.

We are short on imagination and long on will power. Every magazine contains some advertisement urging men to "go get" what they want, to be "he" men. What would make these same men really happy would be the power to really enjoy something enjoyable, the power to take pleasure in a moment's beauty.

Beauty we need, awareness of beauty we need, imagination not materially motivated.

Perhaps it is the task of artists to break this inertia. Who else?



Courtesy of the Art in Trade Club

FIG. 93—SUN-ROOM DESIGNED BY SONS-CUNNINGHAM REED AND RATTAN COMPANY FOR
THE ART IN TRADES CLUB EXHIBITION OF 1926

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